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MARY'S CONFERENCES

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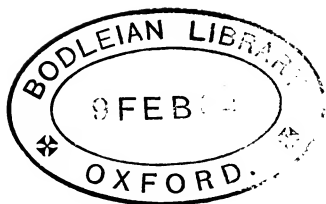
Her Loving Children,

BOTH IN THE WORLD AND IN
THE CLOISTER.

—:O:—

London:
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,
AND DERBY.

*[And may be had at the Convent of the Maternal
Heart of Mary, Hyson Green, Nottingham.]*



IMPRIMATUR:

✠ Eduardus, Episcopus Nottinghamiensis.

PREFACE.

The Conferences in this little volume were addressed to the Sisters of the "Little Company of Mary," before their profession, by the present Mother Superioress of the community, and are now published for the use, in the first instance, of the Sisters of this Institute, and also of persons living in the world, who it is hoped will find in them some good practical advice which will enable them to follow out the injunction of the holy apostle, and though living in the world, to live not according to the spirit and maxims of the world.

The authoress has, as is now generally known, already published several small devotional works, and others will follow in due course. These little books form a series under the title of "Our Lady's Library." The great object they all have in view is to set forth the exceeding beauty and spiritual efficacy of the

devotion to the holy Mother of God, of which the Venerable Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort was the special exponent, in his works, "The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin," and "The Secret of Mary unveiled to the Devout Soul." Another and secondary object of them is to persuade Christians to take up in real earnest the practice of helping the dying, by prayer and in every way they can, and this as a corollary or sequence of the "True Devotion," because it is believed no devotional practice can be more pleasing to the Blessed Mother of God, or more in accordance with the spirit of true devotion to her, than to assist those of her children who are in most urgent need of assistance.

Some probably who read this little book will not have read the writings of De Montfort alluded to above, or the other works of this series,—*"The Path of Mary,"* &c.—and therefore will hardly know what it is we are speaking of; and as these Conferences presuppose some acquaintance with the devotion,

it will perhaps be as well to say a few words about it. It would not be possible, however, in this short Preface to give a sufficient explanation of it, and the writer would earnestly recommend his readers to procure for themselves one or other of the small works which specially treat of it. They will find all the information they require in the works of De Montfort mentioned before, or in the "Path of Mary," by the authoress of these Conferences.

The "Treatise on the True Devotion," &c., was translated with great care, as he tells us in his Preface, by Father Faber, and this is how he speaks of the devotion: "I cannot think of a higher work, or a broader vocation, for any one, than the simple spreading of this peculiar devotion of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort. Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it, and the transformation it causes in his soul, will soon convince him of its otherwise almost incredible efficacy as a means for the salvation of men, and for the coming of the kingdom

of Christ. Oh! if Mary were but known, there would be no coldness to Jesus then," &c. The Venerable Grignon de Montfort, he tells us, "died at the age of forty-three, in 1716, after having founded two religious congregations—one of men and one of women—which have been quite extraordinarily successful. It was on the 12th of May, 1853, that the decree was pronounced at Rome, declaring his writings to be exempt from all error which could be a bar to his canonization. If I may dare to say so, there is a growing feeling of something inspired and supernatural about it, (the 'Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin,') as we go on studying it, and with that we cannot help experiencing, after repeated readings of it, that its novelty never seems to wear off, nor its fulness to be diminished, nor the fresh fragrance and sensible fire of its unction ever to abate." —*Preface to the "True Devotion, &c."*

As regards the little book, "The Path of Mary," already mentioned, his lordship the Bishop of Nottingham says

of it: "Having read several times with much pleasure and satisfaction the little work entitled 'The Path of Mary,' We heartily recommend it to the Faithful of our Diocese. It appears to us to be a faithful and devout exposition of the 'True Devotion to the Holy Virgin,' of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort, a devotion which has received the sanction of the Church, and which is full of spiritual graces."

In the "Path of Mary" is given an interesting summary of the history of the devotion from the earliest ages, for the Venerable Grignon de Montfort, though its zealous exponent and apostle, was by no means its originator. Indeed we may say with truth that our Blessed Lord Himself first taught it by His own example. Those who practise it are endeavouring to imitate Him. He gave Himself to Mary; for nine months He lived by every breath she drew, and during His mortal life He was subject to her.

M. Boudon, the saintly Archdeacon of Evreux, composed a book on this

devotion, in which he says it is so ancient that we cannot fix the date of its commencement. He also mentions the different Popes who have approved it, the theologians who have examined it. The Blessed Marino, brother to Cardinal Peter Damien, embraced this devotion in 1036, as is related by the cardinal. Later on, we find in the life of the saintly Mother Agnes of Jesus, a Dominicaness, that this devotion had been revealed to her from her very childhood, and that, in consequence of the peace and happiness she found in its practice, she was most earnest in inducing others to adopt it. M. Olier, the founder of St. Sulpice, and many other priests, embraced the devotion through the advice of this holy woman. Father Simon de Roxas, of the Order of the Redemption of Captives, made this devotion popular in Spain and Germany, and obtained of Gregory XV., through the instance of Philip III., ample indulgences for all who practised it. Father de los Rios, the Augustinian, devoted himself to spreading it

both by preaching and writing. In his work "*Hierarchia Mariana*," he treats with great piety and learning of the antiquity, excellence, and solidity of it. The Theatine Fathers in the seventeenth century established it in Italy, Sicily, and Savoy. Father Stanislaus Phalacius, the Jesuit, spread it in Poland. Father de los Rios, in his work just mentioned, quotes the names of Cardinals and many noble persons who embraced it. Cornelius à Lapide, having been appointed to re-examine it, did so, and praised it in a manner which we might have expected from his well-known piety. The Jesuit Fathers, always zealous in the service of our Blessed Lady, presented a treatise on this devotion to the Duke Ferdinand of Bavaria, then Archbishop of Cologne. He gave it his approbation and permission to be printed, and exhorted all the parish priests and religious of his diocese to promote the devotion as much as they could. Cardinal Berulle, whose name is in benediction throughout France, was most zealous in spreading it in that country.

It is clear, then, that this devotion is no novelty, and, if it is not common, the reason may be that it is too precious to be relished and practised by all the world. In other words, it will not be relished by those who have no taste for that humble, meek, and childlike spirit which our Blessed Lord tells us we ought all to strive to acquire.—*Vide "Path of Mary," pp. 24, &c.*

The essential part of the devotion consists in giving oneself up unreservedly to our heavenly Mother, doing everything *with* Mary, *in* Mary, *by* Mary, and *for* Mary, and by this means growing more and more into the likeness of her Divine Son Jesus, through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It was that Holy Spirit who formed Jesus in Mary, and it is by the power of this same Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of Mary, that Christians must be formed. She is the Mother of the Head, and therefore necessarily also of the members.

The writer of this Preface would again most earnestly entreat his readers

to study the devotion for themselves in either of the little books named; they can be easily procured for a very trifling sum. The few words he has said about it in this Preface cannot possibly give them a proper idea of its sublimity, its beauty, and its simplicity.

Most truly does Father Faber say, (Preface to the "True Devotion,") "It is the miserable unworthy shadow which we call our devotion to the Blessed Virgin that is the cause of all these wants and blights, these evils, and omissions, and declines," which we experience in ourselves and see in others. And the worst part of the matter is the positive discouragement which a tender and loving, though profoundly reverent, devotion to our heavenly Mother receives even from some good people. They speak of it as something unsuited to English Catholics, and fit only for Italy, and France, and Spain. This is "poisoning the wells" indeed. It is perfectly untrue, as witness the warmth and tenderness of Catholic devotion to Mary which

existed here in England for centuries before the (so-called) "Reformation." Whatever distaste for such devotion may still linger amongst us, (for happily it is gradually disappearing,) is simply owing to the deadly blighting effects of the heretical atmosphere in which it is our unhappiness to live.

H. M. W.

KENILWORTH.
1881.

MARY'S CONFERENCES

TO HER LOVING CHILDREN,

Both in the World and the Cloister.

CONFERENCE I.

It is several years since I promised the Children of the Maternal Heart of Mary some Conferences, to enable them to persevere in the path of Mary, and which at the same time may be of use to others as well.

There are many conferences written addressed to religious, but few for those who have not the happiness of being called away from the world to serve God in a life entirely consecrated to Him. If religious, with their many helps, need these whispers from God, if I may so call them, which go by the name of Conferences, how much more do those

who live in the midst of the world's distractions need these helps?

Many of these Conferences, as will be seen, are addressed to those who are aiming at being spouses of Jesus. Now I have always contended that Jesus not only *can*, but *does*, possess devoted spouses in the world. As I have said in one of my Conferences, it is possible to be a spouse of Christ in the world, as it is likewise possible to be in the convent, and yet *not* be a spouse of Christ.

Many of these Conferences were written for those of you who were the first to leave the world in order to join the "Little Company of Mary." You came into the convent with your imperfections to be corrected, with your good qualities to be nurtured and made solid and more supernatural. But all that is said in these Conferences to the first postulants of our little company applies equally to you, my readers, as many of you as are aiming at being spouses of Jesus in the world. Many would wish to leave the world and join some

community, but are hindered. Both these classes of readers will, we think, find this little work acceptable, and a help to them in their advance in the path of perfection.

You are all longing to be better. You all want to be better, that you may be more pleasing to Jesus. You want to give Him pleasure, dear Lord that He is. He has touched your hearts, and you love Him with a love you can scarcely own to yourselves. You want to be better, that you may be more united to Him. You do love Him, and your love prompts you to do something for Him. What can you do? Oh, please Him by drawing Him closer to you: make a home for Him in your hearts; root out from them whatever would be displeasing to Him in them. Be earnest about this. By examination, by reading what others have found useful, by putting in execution carefully the good desires God may inspire you with, grow gradually holier and better, and become spouses of Jesus. You may never be able to leave the world,

your place may be in it, but your place is likewise in the Heart of Jesus, whether in the convent or in the world. Your soul is made for union with Jesus; it cannot be happy in aught else but in that union for which it was made by God. Be united with Jesus; be His true spouse. He may place you under the same roof with Himself, or He may keep you in the world, and even at a long distance from any church where He dwells in His Sacrament of love: but remember St. John the Baptist, he of whom Truth Itself has said, that of those who were born of women there were none greater than he, and yet how he sanctified himself apart from our Lord, how strong he was in grace, and how little sanctified were the apostles themselves in our Lord's life-time, living with Him as they did. How weak they were in grace.

He can give grace everywhere, He *will* give it, He *does* give it; and many who have lived near Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament on earth will not be the nearest to Him in heaven. How close

is that wonderful saint born without sin, St. John the Baptist, to Jesus now,—far closer than many of His disciples who were so close to Him on earth.

Not that I am the least decrying the grand, inestimable, unspeakably great privilege of the religious, the living under the same roof with our Blessed Lord, for that is the great, great privilege of the religious, that is the grand grace of all the graces the religious possesses. Those cannot be too thankful who are called by God to this happy life. But let us all rejoice in one another's good; let Mary's children in the world rejoice in Mary's favoured children in the cloister; let the one help the other; let those in the world contribute of their temporal goods to those in the convent, and those in the convent contribute of their spiritual goods to their sisters in the world. Let them be united in the one common work of their Mother.

We so often hear the excuse made by people employed in various avocations that these *duties* (mark the word and

remember what it means,) interfere with their serving God. It is such a sad, sad mistake. It is in fact making a charge against God. We may be united to God in the midst of the most distracting employments, and these employments, far from retarding, will advance us on the way of perfection. In writing for Mary's little flock I have felt inclined to write for all who enter the "Path of Mary." Our Lady's Heart is large. Its love and care extend to all her children, whether in the world or devoted to God in retirement. Mary watches and provides for her children in all states of life, loves them in all. Mary's own in the cloister will assist and help as far as possible those engaged in the various avocations and engagements of the world. There will be a special bond of union between all who enter the path of Mary; thus there will be no narrowness of mind or selfishness regarding their Institute. Imitating Mary, their thought in all things is for the good of Holy Church. Large souled, like Mary, as far as possible, must they

be. As I have said, they must forget themselves in her, lose themselves in her. You, my sisters, are a mere nothing, the last and least of God's Church, perhaps, if considered apart from the graces you have obtained from Mary, who, viewing you so destitute of good, a little waif, as it were, one so very poor and naked, has wooed you to herself, taking pity on you, as it is like her tender compassionate heart to do, for she loves to seek after the most forlorn, to care for with greatest care the soul most in danger of being lost, the most destitute of natural good. Perhaps you have been brought away from the world to receive the special graces of a religious life, because if you had been left in the midst of so much temptation as the world presents you would have yielded and been lost. Love then cordially your sisters in the world, do them all the good you can. It is with the hope that what I have written may do them a little good, perhaps encourage them a little, that I desire that your rules, contrary to the usual custom in communities,

may be printed for all to read. The married woman may be urged to be as earnest for the good of her children as you are bound by rule to be for the good of your spiritual children. Mothers mould men. Ah, what a sad, sad pity that the moulds being defective the men are spoilt also. Ah, young mother, you little thought, when you yielded to angry passions before your child was born, that your child would receive from you that depraved inclination to the passion that now makes your own life wretched. You little thought, when you indulged in vanity, that the seeds of vanity were being sown in your unborn daughter's heart, and when the conceited child grows up to be a vain frivolous woman, without principle, and not under the influence of strong grace, be not surprised if she, when tempted, disgraces herself and you, which she will do unless God's grace and her own earnest endeavours counteract your evil influence. Will you then reproach yourself? You may, but perhaps it will be a despairing reproach that it is too late. No, it is

never too late. You have still a mother's power for good, and you may use it. Better for you, far better, if you had been trained and formed yourself before you undertook to be a mother to form and train others. What sorrow you would have been saved ! But it is not too late ; you may use the grief your children cause you for their good. You may, even though you deserve it, offer your suffering for the spiritual good of your children in union with the suffering our Lord endured from His ungrateful children, ourselves. Mothers, think of what Jesus suffered from His, by the pain you endure from yours. As a rule good parents have good children, but there are exceptions. Sometimes also both parents are not good, and the one that is bad influences the children for evil. When therefore, mothers, you are suffering bitter pain, though you have done your duty as parents, or have endeavoured to do it, you may unite yourselves still more with Jesus suffering from the cruel treatment of those for whom He had laboured and suffered. You may make saints of your

children by your prayer and sanctified sorrow. You may be the real mothers of your children, "mothers by grace as well as by nature," as you should be. They may be born again to the life of grace even at the last hour, if you are in earnest. The times are indeed bad. It almost seems as if we may apply the words of our Lord to these days: "Woe to those who are with child and give suck in those days." But, mothers, arise and plead: "He who could not resist the tears of the widow of Naim will be moved by the sight of thousands of mothers pleading for their children's souls. He will not allow a whole generation of young men to perish wet with their mothers' tears."

You too, my children, spouses of Jesus, are mothers. You, each one of you, if you possess Mary's spirit, though a virgin, are a mother. You have the purest form of human love for others that this earth has ever seen, a mother's love: "Many are the children of the barren, rather than of her that hath a husband." Our Lord expects that you will give Him children. Barren before the world

you may appear, but before God you are a fruitful branch of the True Vine; your children are as olive branches round about His table. You must be true mothers, mothers by suffering even unto death. Offer (with permission) your death in advance to give birth to children, in the spirit of the mother-like Shepherd who tells us, "I lay down My life for My sheep."

CONFERENCE II.

Father Faber tells us that the Church is like a beautiful tree, ever putting forth new branches, blossoms, and fruits. None of the old ones fall away, but new ones are added; new devotions, new orders, are age by age added to the already existing ones. To ask, Why are there so many orders? might be answered by the question, Why are there so many and such various kinds of flowers? Each flower has its own peculiar beauty, and is distinct from flowers of other kinds, and that God

designs this is shown by the fact that if one flower is grafted on another its seed will not fructify ; as likewise mule birds have no progeny. God has ordered this ; and as in the beginning, when He commanded the earth to bring forth fruit after its kind, creation, according to His divine will, looked beautiful with its various plants and flowers, each of a distinct kind, so in God's new creation, His far more beautiful and wondrous work, the Church, each flower must have its own peculiar sweetness, each fruit its own taste, if His designs and will are corresponded with. The various choirs of angels have their own distinct beauty, their own office ; they shine with a peculiar lustre, one choir differing from another, God having a particular pleasure in each distinct beauty He has bestowed upon them. Why do I dwell upon this ? It is because it is so important for us to recollect that our perfection consists in our corresponding with the designs of God in our regard.

This is important for all Christians ; it should be the subject of their medita-

tions ; their prayers should be directed to beg of God to make known His will to them. Every one has some particular work to do for God. He desires each one to minister to His glory in some particular way, but whilst in individual souls in the world He may Himself insensibly be leading and guiding their spirit to some particular end, perceived perhaps better by their directors than themselves, in a community He expects the members themselves to study the special spirit and end of their institute, and He may not therefore give such lights and attractions to members of a community as He might to souls in the world, for this reason, that as a rule God ever employs natural means where natural means suffice, and supernatural only when natural means would fail to accomplish His design. A religious, therefore, may not expect the same internal guidance regarding her devotions, &c., as some devout souls experience in the world. God having led her into a community having a certain end, possessing a certain spirit,

having some special devotion, would not inspire her with such attractions as I have before said as regards souls in the world He sometimes does. No; God expects the religious to have the same devotion and spirit as the order to which He has called her. If, after having studied the rules of the order she has entered, and learned the special end and spirit of it, a novice found she was not attracted to it, but rather felt God calling her to some other work, to some other devotion, and if her director decided that such repugnance was not a temptation (as it often is), and that the other attraction to some other good work, to the spirit of some other institute, was not a temptation or delusion, it would be the duty of such a novice to leave, for instead of saving her soul by entering that order, she would run the risk of losing it.

Regarding professed sisters of an institute, their lives have to be spent in exact correspondence with the injunctions of their rules and constitutions,

and any other particular spirit should be dreaded, and any other way than the beaten track be regarded as probably a delusion, unless, which I pray God may never happen, a sister should be so unhappy as to have mistaken her vocation, and this cannot be with one entirely open with her director, with one who during her novitiate was simple and obedient. It may be rather hard to self-love to have to give up, it almost seems, one's own identity, and become part of a body. Many give up their relations, friends, their worldly goods, their freedom; they will give these up with scarcely a struggle, but to give up entirely themselves,—ah, this is the far harder task; but this is the grand thing to be attained, this is the one principal thing God requires of us, and that so endears us to Him; the soul indeed thus detached from itself is the pearl of great price that the God-Man so loved as to give His whole substance, His whole Self, to possess. Oh, let us give ourselves entirely to God as He wishes. “My child, give Me your

heart," He asks. "My God, I give Thee my heart," we reply; but do we give our hearts? Do we give them entirely to the God who so prizes them? God wants the whole of our heart. It must not be divided with aught else. How good He is to care at all for us.

Think, dear sister, by leading you into religion God has given you a mark of predilection, of predestination. He desires you to be especially dear to Him in time, especially dear to Him in eternity; especially near to Him in time, and therefore especially near to Him in eternity. But you must correspond to His designs, you must give up yourself wholly, entirely, you must indeed have no will of your own. God gave man a free will, a glorious gift, rendering man like to God Himself. But why was this gift? We love God more as we think of it, and it seems to us that God risked His own glory that He might have the free love of His creatures. This is our human way of speaking; all things must tend to God's glory. If we had not free-will we could not offer a

gift to God; but now we can satisfy a little our craving to do something for our Love, our Life. We can and we will come and say to Him, "My Lord, my God, and my all, I give myself entirely to You, I will love You alone, live for You alone; I am Thine." And to the soul faithful to the offering it has made the sweet voice of God will one day whisper, "Thou art Mine, I have chosen thee, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, I have drawn thee to Myself, taking pity on thee."

If then it is so important, so necessary, for religious to understand well the spirit of their institute, they should ask God to enlighten their minds, and give them docile hearts to follow the dictates of His Holy Spirit; they must likewise use natural means, by studying and meditating upon the various points of their rule, and endeavouring to conform themselves entirely to it. On entering religion every one most certainly has the resolution of giving themselves entirely to God, but they little know how much that involves. The first step is a

mere nothing in comparison with what is afterwards required by God from the soul He has thus drawn from the world that it may possess, love, live for Him alone. But oh, the happiness, the known peace and happiness those taste on earth, as well as the unknown happiness they look forward to in heaven, who entirely renounce themselves, and live simply in union with the will of God. The will of God is the melody of earth; our wills must harmonize with this dear will; then is sweet music made even on this sinful earth, music the angels delight in as it mingles with their own sweet hymns of praise and love. Our presence on earth pleases, delights God, when we stand simply, humbly seeking Him alone, seeing Him everywhere, losing ourselves in Him, and our own days likewise pass in peace; but there are times when our presence causes discord in the music we should make for God, when we are not a pleasure to Him, but an offence in His sight. What a pity this is,—sad for ourselves as well as displeasing to God. We are never happy when we jar against,

when we cross the will of God. How could we be? It would be as contradictory as its opposite, namely, to be unhappy when we are close to the source of all happiness, our good, good God.*

Let us then seek the will of God, and let us dispose ourselves to accept it in all the occurrences of life. We must have a very docile spirit for this. If we accustom ourselves at all times and even in indifferent matters to do rather the will of another than our own, we shall be more easily able to comply upon the more important matters, and at the really necessary times when we are bound to obey.

Let us pray for the grand gift of humility, for if we have it we shall prefer to do the will of another rather than our own. It will make us unselfish, and that is surely what we all desire,—to put off ourselves bit by bit,—and the glorious reward for this is, that for every

* There are, however, certain times when, though we are really united to God, He permits for our good that we really suffer unhappiness, when He Himself causes our pain and grief. This is exceptional, and like no other sorrow.

little part of self we crush and put away, God fills up the vacuum with His own loving presence and precious gifts. Only let us put off ourselves, and we shall be as happy as the day is long. We shall be a delight and joy to the Heart of God, but we cannot do it all at once. To make a resolution to be wholly unselfish would have little effect. Let us enter into particulars, let us resolve on certain occasions that we can bring before us at the present moment, to renounce our own will, to cross ourselves in something we wish to do or wish to say. Let us resolve to struggle and use violence with ourselves, if need be; the reward will some day come, and the reward is indeed exceeding great.

In commencing, at the wish of the bishop, this series of discourses upon the spirit and end of our institute, I thought it well to lay before you these few thoughts first, viz., that perfection consists in doing the will of God; that the will of God for the religious is found in conformity of spirit to the religious order to which she belongs; that to put

away one's own lights, will, and wishes, to be guided like a child, or rather, moulded like a piece of clay, (it will be remembered, and more particularly mentioned in its proper place, that in this institute the priest will ever be the director and entire spiritual guide of each community,) requires a stripping and renunciation of oneself, painful perhaps to nature, and considered by the Fathers so meritorious that they compare it to martyrdom, as it is likewise considered that on the day of her profession the religious regains her baptismal innocence, if she had previously at some time in her life lost it. Is this worth working for? To be regarded by God as innocent as a child, as valiant as the martyrs, to be folded in the arms of Jesus as His cherished spouse, to love, to be loved, to be happy with Him on earth; to love, to be loved, to be happy hereafter in heaven, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, singing the song that none other knoweth.

CONFERENCE III.

I have already on another occasion put before you the thought that I now desire you to consider, viz., how the Church, the Spouse of Christ, follows her Lord and Master, and replicates within herself His life. The life of the Church plainly shows this,—its devotions, and more especially the religious orders. We have the hidden life of our Lord exemplified in the Church by the contemplatives, the fathers of the desert, and the early ages of the Church, when it lived obscure, hidden in the catacombs. Later on came the various active Orders, the Friars Preachers for example, going about everywhere doing good; wonderful saints, working miracles; Orders devoted to healing the sick; the Church more visible before the world, doing wonders, admired yet persecuted. Then follows a wonderful increase of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, Orders devoted to it, two of

the principal more recent Orders in the Church being the Faithful Companions of Jesus and Mary, who exemplify the holy women who followed Him faithfully to the last, and the Order devoted to the adorable mystery of our Lord's Agony in the garden. The Church has commenced within herself the Passion of her Lord. Never, says a great man of the present day,* were there times like these. We can see it plainly for ourselves. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together against the Lord and against His Christ." Truly have the kings of the earth stood up and leagued themselves against the anointed of the Lord, against His Vicar. At the time of the Passion even the good, even the saintly ones, even those gifted with the power of working miracles, fell away, they left their Lord. Oh, the sad sight at the present day of some great ones of the Church, revered at one time almost as saints, who fall, who desert their Lord. What more fitting Order to represent the phase of

* Cardinal Newman.

our Lord's life to which the Church has now arrived than one which represents especially the Passion of our Lord, His Crucifixion, His Mother on Calvary? The Church can never die; it is God's Church, it is the mystical body of Christ. The Sacred Body of Jesus, when Its mortal life had fled, and It hung exposed to the mockery of the beholders, was adorable, Divine. If worse times come for the Church than the present; if, as Scripture and the revelations of the saints appear to indicate, there will be a sad time in the Church of almost universal desolation, if it appears to the world as extinct, if it is sneered at, mocked at as though dead, remember it is divine, it will rise again more glorious than ever.

To return, however, to my present purpose, the putting before you the end of our institute. You will see that, poor, weak, little that we are, we are called to do a great work. In the multifarious matters of the day, our many works and various duties, we might lose sight of the object, the special spirit and

end of our institute. It is for this reason our father and director has desired that there should be a weekly chapter (distinct from the chapter of faults), that we might meet together and seriously meditate upon the end and motive of our being thus gathered together. First and foremost, the end we have in view is to perfect ourselves. And how? By the imitation of Jesus and Mary: especially are we bound to imitate our crucified Lord and His martyred Mother on Calvary. This is the final end to which we are tending: we aspire to be spouses of Jesus Crucified. Are we worthy to be so now? No; we draw back, and the prayer rises to our lips, "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." No, we are not, we never could be worthy, but we will put ourselves into the hands of Mary, praying her to take us, to prepare us for our espousals with Jesus. We do belong to her now, but we act as though we were our own. We are not our own, we have been purchased at a great price. We were

bought by the Precious Blood of Jesus. We were given by Jesus dying to His Mother. We belong to Mary: she suffered for us on Calvary; she loved us there, she pleaded for us there, she offered her life for us, and would willingly have sacrificed it if such had been the will of God. What then are we doing for her? We have fulfilled the will of Jesus in giving ourselves to her. It is a grand, an important step, but the hardest task comes after. We act as though we were entirely free, as though our time and ourselves were entirely at our own disposal, whereas we are Mary's property and possession. We cannot dispose of the least good thought: it is Mary's. We must constantly ask ourselves, "Am I doing what I think Mary would like one who belongs to her to be doing? Am I doing it with the intention of pleasing her, or am I doing it to please myself, to satisfy my self-love?" We may often lose the merit of good actions and sufferings because of this sad admixture of self-love. We may be obstinately bent upon doing a certain

work, saying, "I must do something, I cannot be a burden to the community;" but it may be only because our self-love would otherwise be hurt. If we had turned to Mary, saying, "Mother, what shall I do, what would please you?" we should perhaps have found that the work we are so anxious about, and have so earnestly begged to do, was not what she wished of us. Oh, for the simple, docile, childlike spirit out of which God makes His saints, out of which Mary forms other Christs, the soul that does not look for the esteem of others, the soul that looks up to, acts before God alone. Let us pray for this spirit; let us entreat it of God by prayers, by penances, by tears. Mary would act in us, but we are obstinately bent on acting ourselves. If the clay rise up against the potter and refuse to be moulded, how can the statue be formed?

Let us in our daily examen not alone ask the question every religious should ask, "Have I mortified myself to-day? have I performed such-and-such actions as a penance, or endured such-and-such

sufferings in a spirit of penance?" but let us likewise ask ourselves, "Have I mortified my will? have I contradicted myself? have I done what the catechism tells me I must do, curbed and corrected myself by self-denial? If I have not done so, the day has not been well spent." Ah, what a sad thought for one of us to think that because I have been negligent, lazy, a soul I might have saved if I had been fervent, if I had prayed and worked so as to please God and induce Him to grant what I asked, a soul, a living immortal soul might have been saved; but it was left to die unheeded, unprayed for, whilst I, thinking of myself, seeking my own ease and comfort, my mind full of little petty matters, it may be of troubles and disquiets occasioned by my very selfishness, cannot, as I lay my head upon my pillow at night, go in spirit to purgatory, and say, "Blessed be God: I have worked and prayed, and thus I trust have sent a soul thither; I have, as far as depended on me, saved a soul this day." If we work earnestly we may at

night hope with joy that we have saved many souls that day. Oh, what a grand work. Let us take courage; let us, dear sisters, help one another; let us put away self; let us never consider ourselves but as something unspeakably nasty, deserving only contempt, and glad to get it, since it is the only treatment we deserve. What are we that we love our own wills, that we desire our own way rather than the will and way of those who command us?

If we were truly humble, if we had a true religious spirit, we should prefer to do what the youngest sister in the house asked us to do, rather than to go our own way, to do our own will; we should wish to do no action whatever that was not an act of obedience; we should not look at the person who commands; we should not regard the command given. We have come into religion to be like Jesus, to obey. He obeyed good and bad indifferently; He has given us an example that we might do likewise. Let us then generously resolve to imitate Him. He will be our eternal re-

ward; He will likewise indeed be our present reward, for no storm can assail the soul thus bound, united to the obedience of Jesus; nothing can trouble it, nothing can molest the calm peace that soul enjoys. It is in such a soul that God can speak, and His whispers are sweet, sweet as the evening walk of Adam with his Creator, nay sweeter. The human voice of Jesus to the soul hidden within Him seems, we might fancy, almost sweeter on earth than it will be in heaven. It is so unlike the voices of earth. It is so good of Him, who is so great, to condescend to what is so little.

The first feature, then, of our institute is, that we are to become as little children. Our devotion is an interior one principally, but it manifests itself exteriorly; thus the sister who does not obey simply is certainly not simple and childlike with our Lady. She does not fulfil the contract, nay vow, she has made, since, knowing well that she belongs to our Lady, that she is her property, she does not use that

property as she promised, nay, vowed to do. This cannot be too often repeated. As Mary's own, as a religious, you are bound (religion is to bind); and in the world your wish not to do a certain thing might have been some excuse for not doing it; but in religion it is none, it should be rather an incentive to exertion; that is to say, if there could be any greater reason to a religious for doing an action than because she is told to do it, but there can be no greater reason. Suffering is good, mortification is good, but obedience is better. We must obey, because we can make no progress unless we do; we must obey, because we wish to imitate Jesus. This exterior obedience helps us in our own interior obedience, our subjection to Mary. If we live in her company, if we keep her ever before our eyes, if we have union with her, we should never for a moment think of not executing what we are told to do, even though it is apparently or is really unreasonable. We should disturb our union with Mary, we should ruffle the

calm of her presence, we should have to let go her hand, if we murmured or complained,—I will not say refused, for this will surely never be,—to do what we are told. Mary is encompassing us, wishing us to be as another Jesus to her, and we, we proudly raise ourselves up and do the very opposite to what Jesus would have done, and the sweet influence our Mother would exert over us is weakened, it cannot act. A child in the womb is completely under the influence of its mother; her thoughts, her words, her actions, all affect it; the child has no power to resist this influence. Look upon the great and good men of all ages, and you will find as a rule, if you read their histories, that they have had great and good mothers. The great Mother above all mothers desires to have noble, holy children: she will do her part by them if they do not mar her work; and the great, the important thing for them to do is to be docile, to simply follow her leading. You will know the soul thus docile to Mary: that soul wishes to be unknown,

hidden; that soul will not put itself forward; it prefers the company of Mary to any other company; but above all it is pliable; it sees God in others; whatever happens, that soul cannot be disturbed. "God permitted it, it could not have otherwise happened," is its thought in any vexatious accident or event. That soul prefers to act at the bidding of others rather than upon its own responsibility; that soul ever keeps hold of God's hand, therefore it is not precipitate, hurried; it works earnestly, but not fussily. "God does not require the works of our hands, except as proofs of our loving, working hearts."

The exterior of one of Mary's own might not appear to a careless observer as very different from that of any other, but one who watched at all times would see that no unbecoming gesture is ever made. There is a certain modesty in the gayest and merriest times. There is a certain unconscious watchfulness even during sleep. The first act of a child of Mary in the morning would not be to yawn and stretch; neither at any

time, if you took her by surprise, would you find any difference in the simple, natural manner she has acquired by living close to Mary, by living therefore more consciously in God's presence rather than in that of any of His creatures. Ah, the soul that begins and ends its day thus in God's presence in union with Mary is indeed happy, is indeed on the way to holiness, is indeed preparing a happy eternity for itself and for others, because that soul will save souls unknown to itself on earth, but one day to be known by it in heaven; there they will be its glory, its crown. That soul will proceed joyously on its way on earth; it will be prepared by Mary to be a spouse of Jesus; she will herself invisibly assist at its espousals with her Son, and He, drawing that shrinking though happy soul to Himself, will whisper to her: "Fear not, thou art fair to Me;" He will say, "I see Mary in thee;" and that soul will tell her Lord that she loves Him alone, that He is all to her, the beginning and the end of all things to her, that He is her very

life, "bone of My bone, flesh of My flesh." She speaks to Jesus, and He speaks in answer, "I have laid down My life for thy ransom; I have taken it up again for thy crown." And that soul thus united to Jesus learns His various loves: it burns with His love for souls. "Give me children, or I die, Jesus, my beloved;" and Jesus replies, "Choose whom thou wilt; I will hearken to thy voice in the day that thou callest upon Me." "Then, dear Lord, listen to me, I beseech Thee. Jesus, they perish to whom Thou gavest life. Save them, O Jesus." And the Spirit of God moves upon the troubled waters of this earth, and souls are raised to life that were perishing therein; and that spouse of Jesus will, though a virgin, be the joyful mother of many children, who will proclaim her blessed, blessed with a part of the blessedness of the Mother who brought her forth, Mary most holy, Mary immaculate, Mary, Virgin and Mother. Happy, dear sisters, are we for these graces given to us unworthy. We may regain our baptismal innocence,

we may be holy, we may be virgins, and follow Jesus whithersoever He goeth. We know not yet what this may mean, but Scripture holds it out to us as our special privilege, as our great reward. We may be mothers too. Yes; for "many are the children of the barren rather than of her who hath a husband."

Let us then take courage, let us help one another, let us both by example and word help one another to fulfil the end of our vocation, I might say of our creation. Let us then help and encourage one another, for we may have many petty cares and distractions, we may be inclined with Martha to be troubled about many things and to forget the one thing, to forget the work we are bound together to do, to forget our dear Lord silently speaking to us, silently from His Tabernacle watching us in our various duties about the house; we may be inclined to vex and worry ourselves about many things, perhaps to think lightly concerning our vocation, to consider perhaps that we might have been just as perfect in our own homes, that we

perhaps were more recollected there. Ah, yes, you may have said long prayers, you may have been very recollected, but you were free, you had your own will; whereas here you are bound, you are not free, you are fettered: or if indeed you do not feel this, if you feel perhaps that you have as much liberty as in your former position of life, it is because you seek your own way insensibly in little things; it is perhaps because your superiors, seeing how little you can bear, how imperfect you are, let you have your own way, because they hope that in time you may grow more humble and submissive, more able to bear contradiction, more simply, blindly, obedient, and they may, to use an expression I myself have heard a superior use, "humour you," "so and so must be humoured." Be "humoured" then, if such treatment is thought good for you, but recollect you can never be a spouse of Jesus whilst you require "humouring." But if you wish to be espoused to our Lord (and if you do not why come into religion?) if you wish to belong entirely to Him,

to have Him not alone as Brother, as Master, as Lord, but to belong to Him by a closer tie, by a bond of union of which the sacrament of matrimony is but a figure, the word husband but a name, if you wish this, or rather if you think, or listening to the voice of your director have reason to believe this to be the Will, the wish of God for you, why then for the love of God consider your vocation, weigh it well, think of the fearfulness of losing the high destiny God calls you to.

We can frustrate the designs of God. We know this truth well. We see Lucifer falling from his high estate; we see one of the twelve apostles losing his vocation, betraying his Master, we see him damned; unhappy, unhappy soul for whom it would indeed have been better if he had not been born. Let us think of this and tremble; a vocation is not a light matter. We are told that where God gives the especial graces which He grants to those whom He calls to a perfect life, such graces are, morally speaking, necessary even for their salvation;

in other words that some persons must either be saints or lose their souls altogether, though, of course, the neglect of a vocation is an evil which may be repaired, like any other, on this side the grave.

Now I feel assured there is one thought in your mind regarding vocation, and it is this: that if in silent meditation we consider what we are, and what a spouse of Jesus should be, we feel we dare not aspire to such a state, we cannot be worthy of it. This is a natural thought; you must naturally shrink from the thought of the close union with Jesus which nevertheless you feel drawn to. Depart from me, O Lord, I am sinful; and as you say this you feel as though you could only venture to creep to our dear Lord's feet, as some little petted creature, a dog for example, crawls on the ground to make friends with the master it has offended. Yes, and Jesus loves you to feel thus; to know your unworthiness and His worthiness, that is to say, so to know His goodness that you trust Him the more you feel your

own unworthiness. Yes, it is well to feel how utterly sinful we are: this must ever be; but we must not leave the other undone, we must not distrust our dear Lord. No; we must beg Him to make us better, we must resolve bravely at any cost to submit to whatever operation, whatever crucifying process He may in His wisdom see good, nay, even necessary for us to undergo. It will be hard for human nature, but it will not be for long, and the more fierce the struggle the more quickly will the battle between nature and grace be decided, and the victory won, and nature subdued will be hidden under the beautiful clothing of God's grace, and though by nature black, you yet will be beautiful in God's sight. He will thirst to possess you. Yes, the great Almighty God will thirst, will long for the day when He will consummate in heaven what He began on earth. Happy that soul who in the day of her consummation is found consummated in Christ, happy, blessed, blissful for ever in itself, and causing new happiness and bliss to the holy

angels, to the glorious saints, to its dear Mother Mary, to Jesus, precious even to the Ever-blessed and Adorable Trinity.

CONFERENCE IV.

God said once to one of His saints: "I would willingly speak to many souls, but the world makes so much noise in their hearts that they could not hear Me." Let us think of these words, dear sisters, and see if they apply at all to ourselves, to us who have professed to leave the world. We should not like to think that God comes at times to speak to us, and that we will not listen: but so it may be, so it is. Now the time of meditation is the grand time to hear God speak; but we should wish that God may often come to us and breathe into us that sweet Breath of Life, His Holy Spirit, to invigorate us, to renew us, to strengthen us, and give to our souls what we often feel them craving for. Our souls some-

times are unrestful; we are like sick people, we know not what we want; but there is a void within us which God alone can fill, and therefore in vain would it be for us to seek peace and rest but in God alone. Let us then prize the precious time given us to enjoy God. Indeed, at all times we can be happy in His holy presence "in the vast temple of His immensity;" but He has said, "I will draw her (the soul with whom He desires to speak) into solitude, and there I will speak to her." We are now withdrawn for this short time to think of God and what we can do for Him; how we can serve Him better, and thus make ourselves more happy. Let us then resolve to profit by these brief moments; their being brief will not hinder God from speaking to us, but the dispositions of our own hearts may easily prove a hindrance. Let us beg a docile, humble heart, and that God's Holy Spirit may find us tractable, that we may put no obstruction in the way; and if we think there is any defilement upon our soul, let us make

an act of contrition, let us be ashamed and sorry to appear before our dear Lord with something upon our souls that is giving Him displeasure. "No, Jesus," let us say, "You are too good, I will never displease You. Forgive me; cleanse from my soul aught that displeases You in it. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin. Against Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil in Thy sight." Yes, in the very presence and sight of God we sin. "Seek a place where God is not," said the brave woman of old, "and there we will sin." As a father pitieth his children, so has God compassion on those that fear Him. After contrition there should be, if we would make our prayer acceptable to God, a great spirit of adoration, reverence, fear. God is infinitely loveable, but He is infinitely to be feared. "Fear Him," says our Lord, "who can cast both body and soul into hell." And our Lord Himself is spoken of as being heard whilst on earth in mortal flesh "for His reverence." This, then, should

be our second disposition of soul after contrition, deep reverence, adoration, a sense of the grandeur, the greatness of the adorable Trinity, and of the might, the power of God, and a fear of His awful judgments. "Woe be to that soul," cries a servant of God, "that has lost its fear." We do not know God, we cannot have meditated upon His divine attributes, if we enter into His holy presence with a flippant manner, a careless, perhaps proud, deportment, with distracted mind, with selfish thoughts.

What are we that we think so much of ourselves? Are we doing God service by praying to Him; or rather is it not an inestimable favour, for which we can never be sufficiently grateful, that we are allowed to speak to the good God? What is our intention in speaking to our good Creator? Is it to thank Him for His unspeakable goodness in creating us? Is it to adore Him, to worship Him with profoundest adoration? or do we go to please ourselves, to indulge our feelings either of joy or

sorrow ? which, when carried to excess, is nothing less than spiritual sensuality, and nothing but self-love, as is plain enough, because those people, when through illness or any other reason they find their hearts hard, and that they cannot experience the same tender feelings, give up their prayer ; they cannot please themselves, so they make no endeavour to please God. Oh, what a sad pity that people so neglect humble, persevering prayer and meditation. We cannot but make progress if we meditate well, and we cannot progress (unless hindered by some reasonable cause, and then God supplies the want by some special grace), if we do not meditate. "With desolation is the whole land made desolate, because no one thinketh in his heart." Ah, surely, if we thought in our hearts of what we are, and what God is ; if we thought in our hearts of what God does for us, and how little we do for Him ; of how He thinks ever for us, and how we think at most times of ourselves ; surely, if we daily endeavoured to see ourselves in

the bright light of God's adorable, holy, awful presence, we should hang down our heads, we should despise ourselves, charity would reign in our hearts, we could not be harsh with others, it would be such hypocrisy in us to condemn others when we know ourselves to be so very vile. No; if we constantly saw ourselves as God sees us, never could we be proud or vain. If we saw ourselves in our native hatefulness, apart from the graces God has given us, we should loathe ourselves; but we too often forget ourselves, and still more, we too often misplace God's grace, we attribute it to ourselves, we boast of it as something belonging to us.

We succeed in something through the grace of God, and boast as though it were our own doing. This all comes of want of knowledge of ourselves, want of knowledge of God. We are so very, very worthless; we are so very, very selfish; we think so much of ourselves; we think we have a right to this, a right to that; we have been injured by this person, we have been neglected by

that. Why, each one of us, without a single exception, must acknowledge that we have no right to anything at all except it may be to hell. Ah, what poor foolish things we are to be so blind. Oh, let us pray to the Holy Spirit, let us value every grace; we live in the midst of grace, let us tremble to lose one grace. We have found from experience how weak we are; let us then be wise and value grace, let us beg from God the special grace He has attached to each act of the day, let us be careful to do no action, to entertain no thoughts, to hold no conversation that we cannot ask His blessing on. If we are in the place at the time appointed by obedience we are very secure; if overnight we have well prepared our morning meditation, and preserved recollection, we may expect that God will give us the special grace that will carry us through the day. We shall have a good resolution, we shall have a holy thought in our minds all day, we shall surely not sully our soul by a wilful venial sin. Let us then begin, dear sisters, to esteem

meditation, to value every minute we spend in it; let us be anxious to use the time of meditation well; let us commence at once to think of God in order that we may better know ourselves; let us ask our dear Mother to show us how to meditate; let us draw close to her; let us, as I have said, be contrite, humble, and then let us beg her to enlighten our minds, for no other reason but to know better how to please her Son Jesus. She who lived in the midst of the world with her mind ever full of heavenly thoughts, and who is now in rapturous enjoyment with her pure heart, mind, and soul flooded through and through with her knowledge and love of God, will give some of her holy thoughts to her children if they seek for them earnestly. Let us then hunger and thirst for this knowledge; let us quietly and peacefully seek it, and remain in the presence of our dear Lord, sitting at His feet, like Mary, choosing the better part, the part of the lowly, grateful creature in the presence of the great beneficent Creator, asking Him to

speak, that we may know and therefore love Him better. "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth."

Speak, Lord, that it may be for some comfort to my soul. But we must remember the advice of our Lord, not to cast pearls before swine, that is to say, to those who will make no use of or rightly value what is given. Therefore the soul that simply at prayer amuses herself with certain thoughts or mere vain desires of doing better, desires or resolutions never put in practice, such a soul cannot expect precious pearls, loving words from the Heart of Jesus to be given her. It would be like eating for the mere sake of eating, and eating things injurious, or at least of no use for strengthening our constitution. It is to the faithful soul, daily advancing in the royal road to Jesus, by daily acts of self-denial, of patience, that our Lord will speak, and in which He will enkindle that ray of love which will consume us with its fire, burning away the dross of self, so that in the day of our consummation we shall be found consummated

in Him, and be the loved fruit of His Passion for all eternity.

CONFERENCE V.

“Holy Mother, many things have I written of thee, and yet never enough,” as thy loving servant, Father Faber, said, who wrote so many beautiful things of you. Oh, Mother, the name of mother is a sweet word; how should we feel to thee? Oh, Jesus, show us what Thou didst feel, teach us Thy love for Thy Mother. “It is Jesus in me so loves Mary,” said a lover of Mary to her director. Infant Jesus, with Thy little arms round Mary’s neck, how much didst Thou love her? Oh, Jesus, with Thy head pillowed on Mary’s breast, how didst Thou feel towards her? Oh, Jesus, drinking in sweetness from Thy fair Immaculate one, an image of the delight with which Thou dost feed upon the virtues of Thy chosen ones, make us know that love unlike any other love—Thy love of

Mary. Dear sisters, what are we doing? Of what are we thinking if we think not of Jesus and Mary? If you do not love Mary with this Jesus' love, you have Him not with you as you should have. This love for Mary must be the distinguishing mark of your institute, a child-like confiding love of Mary the Mother above all mothers, the Mother of Jesus. Devotion to the Mother Heart of Mary,—this is what we must pray for, this is what Jesus desires that we should love, the Heart of His Mother, the Heart with its pure immaculate blood, instinct with all holy desires, with nothing the least soiled or imperfect in it, the Heart from which were taken the first drops of the Precious Blood, the Heart that was pierced and broken with sorrow for us her children, the Heart of a Mother, the Heart of such a Mother as Mary. Mother, dear Mother, make us know thy love for us, that we may love thee better. Let us meditate upon it, let us daily perform penances with this special intent, that we may love Mary with

some of that fire that Jesus desires should be enkindled upon earth towards her. I am but repeating what I have so often said before, use Mary's Heart as your own. Love with it, examine your own upon it, drive from your own heart aught that is not Mary-like. Remember again what you have been told in a former conference. Future members of this institute will look to us for an example, for a guide as to what they should do. We shall be as it were mothers to them. Oh, then, let us be true mothers, as I have pointed out elsewhere. See the influence a mother exerts over her unborn child. Her passions, her thoughts, her actions, place the roots of similar passions, etc., in her child. How few mothers think sufficiently of this, or they would surely seek to purify themselves, to be holy, that they may have good and holy children.

Dear sisters, let us consider this, let us leave a good example for those who come after us. Let us be anxious to live holily, that our children, in after

years, may not have occasion to say as an excuse for imperfection, "Our first sisters did so and so, or even said so and so." No, they will act as we have done, that is to say, when we are solidly established, when we are professed.* But we are now training for that profession, we are now being formed. Our Lady herself is guiding and directing us, though perhaps unperceived by ourselves. She will not allow her children to be at a disadvantage because they have no trained novice-mother; she will herself take that part. My children, Mary is your Mother, and she will provide you with whatever you require. She will teach you to live as she would have her children: but she must have docile hearts, or she cannot mould them; this cannot be too often brought to mind.

You cannot for some time have the order and regularity of an old-established community, but you can and must have a charity as great as, nay

* Written some years ago, before the sisters were professed.

greater, I would almost say, than other communities, since you have in a peculiar way to die to yourselves, and to have Jesus and Mary living in you, the God of Love, and the Mother of fair love. What was their life but one of love? What must the life of their children be, but one of holy, happy, heavenly love? And then our end will be love, and we shall enter hereafter into eternal love, for as we live so shall we die. We should endeavour to have no thoughts and desires but the thoughts and desires of Jesus and Mary. This is the glad happy time to be looked forward to when the soul is really united to God so strongly that He makes use of it as He wills, knowing that there will be no obstacle put in the way of the working of His Holy Spirit; knowing, likewise, that any grace He may give that soul she will faithfully attribute to Him, not taking the slightest credit to herself. Happy soul, founded in truth, truthfully knowing herself, truthfully seeing the things of God, preserved from error, from delusion, by the light given

to her by the Spirit of God. Happy indeed, with almost a return to original justice given her; happy with a liberty resembling that of the children of God before they had fallen. Yes, indeed, this is the grand effect of this devotion: we are truly in a certain sense regenerated, born again, and the effect of this new birth from Jesus and Mary is a return in a measure to the original state man enjoyed before the fall; and indeed the souls that correspond faithfully to the graces given to those who walk in this path, who advance, as Mary's faithful servant* says, not to the first, second, or third step alone, but who make this devotion their habitual state, to these souls are given graces so great that they may be in some sense compared even to those enjoyed by our first parents in their state of innocence. But this happy state is not gained without conflict, without struggle, without great and grievous molestation from the evil one, who sees that those who enter the sweet paradise of

* Ven. de Montfort.

Mary, who are placed securely therein, will be protected so strongly from any assaults he may make upon them that in vain will be his efforts. This will be the future happy state of Mary's own,—a remarkable union with God, a sweet simplicity and liberty, which will be at the same time joyous and modest, a demeanour natural and unaffected. The demeanour of one of Mary's children might be gay and bright, but one thing it would not be, it would not be rude or rough. It would not be uncharitable even in the smallest matters, either as regards seculars or the sisters. Mary's own will not need rules for behaviour, for speaking, and so on, before seculars. When they have a novitiate they will not mix with the world before they have been well grounded and rooted in the spirit of Mary, and when they are so then let them come forward, those that she wishes to do so, and they will be the good odour of Jesus and Mary, bringing light and peace where they go, for they will carry Jesus with them.

Yes, the dear martyr* of old called himself "Theophoros," one who carried God; and so of Mary's own it might be said, as was said by the tyrant to St. Ignatius,† they say they carry Christ within them. Yes, they will say it, and with truth. Blessed be Jesus, who has told us, "He that loveth Me keepeth My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

In the meantime, before that happy time of union with the God of love and of peace arrives, what must be done by those beginning? Let them go against their own wills, and one thing let them do above all other things, practise the greatest humility. You have not humility as yet, or if you think you have it you will be told by spiritual writers that you have it not because you think so. Go to Mary in the morning, day by day, making the same prayer: Mother, make me know myself and thee. Strive for

* St. Ignatius.

† "Let him be condemned who says he carries Christ within him."

that one great virtue humility, which does not mean a false view of yourself, by ignoring the gifts God has bestowed upon you; it is simply *truth* to know yourself a little as God knows you. Let this be the first thing done by those who are just entering the way of Mary, and indeed let that be ever the principal thing aimed at by Mary's own, humility and contrition; they will receive from God gratefully whatever graces He bestows upon them; they will not attempt, as some young beginners do, to hide from themselves those graces for fear of vanity: no, they know God's grace is not themselves or anything like themselves, therefore in all simplicity they receive and thank God if He gives them, as He loves to do to Mary's own, those special favours He bestows upon His saints; they on their side, however, do not seek extraordinary gifts, but almost unconsciously they look to God's Will in all things, and desire to walk truthfully before Him; therefore do they seek ever to be humble and contrite of heart, knowing it is the proper disposi-

tion for every creature of this fallen world.

This then is the first step in the Path of Mary, knowledge of oneself, humility; remain there as long as God's Holy Spirit is breathing into you wholesome truths about yourself, and then set to work to contradict your will, to deny yourself. If you are really grounded in humility it will not be so hard a task, this renouncing of yourself, as it would be to one who had not taken this first grand step, this all-important foundation for the future temple to be raised to God within you. Dear children of Mary, do take this to heart; do not spare yourselves now at the beginning, the foundations of your future sanctity are being laid. If you are stubborn you cannot be put into the form Mary wishes you. Leave yourselves in her hands to do with as she wishes; see her will in that of superiors. If you persist in having your own way, secretly if you cannot openly, you will spoil Mary's work. Now you are laying the foundations how careful

should you be that they are not laid crookedly, in which case your whole future might be affected. How many people do we see who have given (in act) all to God, who are trying to live for Him alone, who at least intend or pretend to do so, who have really such good points, who will make great sacrifices, and yet what are they? Are they the saints they ought to be? Ah, Father Faher laments over those souls we see everywhere, like half-finished statues in a sculptor's studio. It is indeed a sad sight to meet with so many who have aimed at the perfect life, and yet are so very, very imperfect. Ordinary people who meet these souls do not see even the good in them, but those who are more experienced see the good, see the grace they have or have had, and mourn. What a pity, what a pity, to have done so much, and not do the little more to please Jesus. Think of His purity, think of the All-Holy God, and of His hatred of the least stain. Think that sin in you, to whom God has united Himself more closely than to

others, is far worse. Those at open enmity with God, sinners of any kind, whether they believe in God or not, do not bring sin so close to Him. But we whom God has drawn close to Himself, sin in us is indeed worse than it is in those who are out of God's grace. It is difficult to speak of this fact. We do not realize our close union with Jesus, some of us may, but to others Jesus does not show Himself, though He really dwells with them in a way they think not of. Get clear of sin, and make a home for Jesus in your hearts. Do not spare yourself now at the beginning, for those who have been very zealous in the commencement of their spiritual life find at last in this sweet way of Mary that afterwards there comes a time of untold rest and peace even in this life. In the path of Mary there is peace at every step, but likewise are there great struggles and trials at certain times; those however will find that in proportion to their earnestness at the commencement will

be the joy and peace they will hereafter find in time and in eternity.

After having gone through the "Spiritual Exercises of Mary," the child of Mary has to remain with this constant thought, "I am to be to Mary as another Christ; I am given to her entirely; she is to mould and form me at will; but if I oppose her, if I show any opposition, she will not be able to exercise her holy influence over me." You know well enough you are not like our Blessed Lord now. No; but remain detached, remain without self-seeking and self-will, and our Blessed Lady will work in you. If you renounce yourself she can work in you, but not otherwise. With a lowly, humble soul, with one that truthfully knows itself, Mary is delighted; that soul remains with a constant tranquil sense of its utter unworthiness, of its nothingness, of its utter incapacity to do the least good thing of itself. It is pliable. Mary can work in such ground; she can form her child; she can prepare it for good influence; she can and will bring the Holy

Spirit to breathe upon the soul and form it to the likeness of Jesus. It is the delight of God thus to pour forth His Holy Spirit upon souls rooted in Mary.

Let us now in the presence of our dear Lord beg from Him the grace we all need, a docile, humble spirit, that can be formed and moulded at will; let us remember we are parts of a building rising in God's militant Church on earth, to be its glory for ever in heaven. Yes, Mary's little company, arising as a mere speck, in time will, with the blessing of God, do great good to the Church on earth, and be an eternal glory to it in heaven. Let us then each do the part allotted to us. Whatever charge is given should be looked upon as a charge given by God Himself. Never mind whether it is to our taste or not; God wishes this certain work done, that is sufficient. I may wish to do something else, but God wishes this particular thing, therefore I will do it gladly. I may wish to finish something I have in hand, but God desires me to leave it and do something else. Then let us go

gladly : let us not mind if our charge is a mean one ; it is not the greatness of what we do, but the way we perform it that will render us pleasing to God ; as it is said in Rodriguez, the performers of a play are applauded, not according to the part they play, but for the way they perform it ; thus, if two parts were given to two actresses, the one the part of queen, and the other the part of a country maid, the country maid would be the most applauded if she performed her part best. We need hardly perhaps remark this,—Mary's own will surely never know what ambition of any kind is, and looking into our hearts, each sister I know can truthfully say she wishes she could find herself as clear from every other sin as from ambition ; but still, it is an evil that has crept in before now into communities ; therefore, as these writings are not only for the present, but the future, it seemed as well to mention that when there are more sisters and more charges, that is, more offices, and perhaps those sisters who come later may be given more

honourable offices than the earlier ones, no one must mind, all we should desire is to see God's work progressing, and if sisters come more advanced in sanctity, more capable of forwarding the work of Mary than we the first poor little ones, we must rejoice, we must say, as St. John the Baptist, "I must decrease, and He must increase." We must put ourselves on one side, we must be unselfish, and then, though thought little of by the world we shall be thought a great deal of by Jesus, which is all we should desire. If we are attached to some charge given us, and think we perform it well, then, when it is taken from us, we should be only anxious that the sister should find in it the pleasure we did, and succeed in it. We need to constantly recollect that we are members of one body. If an arm is broken the whole body suffers; so with us, we should each realize the fact that we are joined together to form one united body; we should help one another all we can. We are members of one body, that body is our dear Lord, and if we really loved

Him we should live in Him more than in ourselves. His wishes will animate us, influence us; we shall truly live by Him.

There are times when we seem to grow dry, our souls seem to be withering, we are dull, which is always a bad sign; we know not what is the matter with us; but depend upon it, if we really could see ourselves we should find it was selfishness; we have taken back part of what we once gave Jesus; we have consciously or unconsciously been thinking of ourselves. We have had selfish desires; we have been wishing for notice from creatures; there have been plans or schemes in our mind simply connected with ourselves. Oh, what a pity, what a pity all this is. Jesus is in our hearts it is true still; His blessed hands are full of divine seeds of grace, but we are filling the parts of our soul where He meant to work, with selfish seeds of venial sin. There is no room for Him to work, and He is displeased; the gentle Jesus is indignant, and the words He spoke of

old to the lukewarm He will speak to us: "Because thou art tepid, and neither hot nor cold, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." Yes, He will send us from Him, and then to whom shall we go? Oh, how distasteful is a tepid soul to Jesus. It had once been warm, He drew it to Himself in a loving embrace, and warmed and enkindled it with divine love, but it gradually loosened itself from that embrace. It was not Jesus' doing; He never let go that poor soul; He loved it with an exceeding love; but that soul forcibly released itself and withdrew, and then Jesus could hold it no longer near the loving furnace of His Sacred Heart. Oh, then, well may we fear to grow tepid, and thus wound Jesus, and oblige Him to withdraw His hold of us. We can well then understand that the displeasure caused by a careless lukewarm soul to the Heart of Jesus is far greater than if the soul were entirely cold, never having been close to that warm devoted Heart. Ah, then, let us dread to grow lukewarm; let us fear that sad state; if only

for our own sakes, for our own comfort, if I may urge so low a motive, we might well dread it, for in a lukewarm state we have just 'enough love of God to hinder us from taking pleasure in worldly matters, harmless perhaps, or indifferent in themselves, from which those derive pleasure who do not love God, and yet at the same time our lukewarm souls cannot find pleasure in God. It is a wretched state, a most miserable state; it nearly always proceeds from neglect of grace and want of mortification, and by immortification is meant, not only self-indulgence, manifest self-indulgence, but likewise that selfishness which hinders us from performing our works and prayers zealously, carefully. Many, when wishing to take a new step in life, to make a new beginning, think to succeed by attempting to do a great deal more, but it might be perhaps better for some to undertake less, and to strive that whatever they do shall be done very well and very punctually. They may resolve certainly upon some extra mortification, they may resolve

principally to make more strenuous efforts to overcome their besetting sin, or to mortify their strongest passion. Mortification is one means of advancing in the way of perfection, but it is possible to lead a very mortified life in some things and still not advance in the love of God, which should be the one constant object of every creature of God.

It is the one object of all our writings to induce people to love God more, and therefore to love their neighbour more ; to fill souls with love, because with love all things are sure to follow. If we really love God we must love others, we must strive to do good to all, we must be happy ourselves, we must be full of virtue. We know not how to induce people to save their souls save by striving to make them love God more, and then "love and do what you will." It is certain the purer the soul the more it is capable of love ; it is likewise certain that purity of soul is attained by mortification ; but there is likewise a means of attaining purity of soul and love of God without the excessive morti-

fications and penances of the saints. We may be in spirit detached from certain pleasures, which however we may enjoy. That soul is indeed a happy soul that can enjoy the innocent pleasures of life in union with God, and never without Him. Strange perversity of the order laid down by God, that many even in God's Church cannot enjoy themselves in union with God at all. They draw a distinct line, they are conscientious, they want to do their duty, therefore they will give a certain time to God. They will comply with the precepts of the Church, and in fact will do more than is strictly obligatory; but when they have done that they will put the thought of God on one side, they will go away from Him at least in thought, sad to say, indeed the thought of God would damp their pleasure.

You who read this, consider if it is not true, either with regard to yourselves or with regard to some that you know, that the thought of God is not the glad happy thought it should be; it is rather an uneasy, troublesome

thought. We hardly like to write it, it is so sad, so sorrowful, for we are not speaking of bad people, we are speaking of those who are striving to save their souls, we are speaking of those who have kind hearts, of those we love for their many good qualities; we write this grieving at heart that so it should be, we write it in sorrow, we write it wishing that our words might be weighed, that they may be seriously considered, and an evil so great remedied. What is the remedy? What, first, is the cause of the evil? It is certainly ignorance, it is want of knowledge of God, it is a wrong idea of God. And this wrong idea of God must have been implanted in the mind from childhood, in some cases indeed sin may have obliterated from the mind the previous knowledge of God; but in how many instances the mind of the child has formed its idea of God from gloomy or superstitious things it hears about God, from threats by indiscreet people of the judgments of God, from (it is sad to say) the example of those whom it loves and

respects, from not having virtue placed before it in an attractive form; the child, if surrounded by bright examples of virtue would learn to know God from those who were imitating Him.

CONFERENCE VI.

CHARITY IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

What is charity? Love. We use the word charity in reference to almsgiving, and it is well, because almsgiving should be prompted by love. Love implies a gift. Whoever loves wishes to give something to the object beloved. St. Ignatius says love is shown by an interchange of gifts between the objects beloved. The charity of which I am now writing, which I wish our sisters to very carefully observe, is charity in act. I do believe there is a very great mutual charity between our sisters of the "Little Company of Mary," a very great union, but I want to see it a little more effec-

tive, a little more active. There is something so beautiful in the sight of God's children on earth devoted to one another, waiting upon one another, anxious to perform any little act of charity, always ready at any sacrifice to do a good turn for each other, loving one another, as the disciple of love says, not in word and tongue, but in *deed* and in truth. It must be a beautiful sight even for the inhabitants of heaven to look down upon. Yes, we want *deeds*, we want deeds that entail self-sacrifice. We should be ever serving others, waiting upon them, letting our joy be to give others joy, glad to put ourselves to trouble to save others trouble, anxious to embrace every occasion that may present itself to show our love for our dear Lord by showing it to His members. Do we love one another as our dear Lord has loved us? Oh, let us think seriously what this love requires of us. We know so well the law of charity. We know we ought to do to others as we would they should do to us, but how do we do this? Good Jesus, You have

told us to love one another if we would show our love for You, and indeed, we show how little, how very little love we have for You. You wish us to love others as You love them. Indeed, indeed, it would be sad for some of us if the love of our Jesus for us was like our love for one another.

Dear, dear Lord, why is it we do not love one another more? It is such a happy thing, it makes us so joyous to love others, to do good to others, to sacrifice ourselves for others, and then our dear loving Lord takes it all as done to Himself. In doing good to one we do good to two, God's creature and God Himself, and yet with all this how careless, callous, and cold we are. Oh, Jesus, show us how You love the charitable souls who are ever seeking to do good to others, who love those whom You love, for whom You died, for whom You lived. Yes, we think of Jesus dying, but do we think of Jesus living that heroic life of thirty-three years? Who would have done it but He? Who could have borne the in-

tense suffering which His love caused our dearest Lord but Himself? Who, if he had the power to have stopped such intense anguish, would not have put an end to it? Some few of God's creatures who have caught His love might choose to suffer on, but few, very, very few. Even the great St. Augustine we find crying out in excess of anguish at the sight of the desolation Satan was making in God's Church, "Either stop these calamities, O God, or take me out of life, that I may not witness them." And God granted his latter request. The death of love of Jesus, and the life of love of Jesus, both we admire. Let us who cannot aspire to that death on Calvary, let us who cannot be martyrs, copy that martyred life of love of our dear, dear Lord. He went about everywhere doing good, and of many of us it may be said we go about everywhere doing evil. Yes, we do do evil. Those professing to follow their Lord most closely do evil. Not that they always know it, not that they always intend it,

but it follows them as the slime of the snail.

There are some, let us think of them with pleasure, with some of the calm content of our dear Jesus; as He follows their lives, as He watches their peaceful presence in His creation, they move about breathing an atmosphere of peace wherever they go, and carrying sunshine into the darkest places. Yes, He loves them, dear Lord, for their little hearts are full of love. He blesses them with the intense love His Heart of love sends forth. Simple, innocent they are, going about with that simplicity of love, so beautiful, the simplicity which casts a charm around wherever the souls who possess it may be, or whatever they are engaged in. The simplicity so allied to charity, the simplicity which, seeking God alone, seeking to please Him alone in all things, knows that infallibly it will please Him by charity to all around. What does that charity consist in? Certainly in kind acts, certainly in kind words to each other, and certainly likewise in kind words about others. Yes,

as there are some unfortunate souls who wherever they go carry a certain devil of discord about with them, say little words that cause a breach of peace, and cause disturbing thoughts in others, so there are some souls, angels of peace, carrying an atmosphere of peace everywhere, dropping little words that reunite estranged souls, that produce peaceful thoughts, and heal wounds.

Oh, these dove-like souls, they have indeed the simplicity of the dove and the wisdom of the serpent, that our dear Lord advised. See the consummate art with which the little words are dropped to heal the breach between two souls. They are dropped apparently so unconsciously that the listener is taken in; the drops of balm to the wounded soul do their work; the peacemaker says no more, but turns the subject, for fear her object should be noticed, and the good undone. She meets the other injured party, and amidst a variety of topics brings in something she may have heard said before the coolness between the two souls arose, so adroitly that the other

wounded soul has some hard thoughts removed; a rush of feeling will sometimes ensue, causing a load to be removed from the heart. For there is always a load on the heart where there is uncharitable feeling; there cannot be joy and brightness; the soul is clouded, dull, mildewy, it cannot shake off the depressing effect of the poisonous exhalations arising from the dead works of uncharitable sins within it.

We do not examine ourselves: we do not in bitterness of heart, in sincere sorrow, strike our breasts contritely, saying, "I have sinned, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;" we do not say this over our uncharitable as over our other sins: and yet what have we done, who have thought bitter thoughts of, and spoken bitter words to, our neighbour? We have thought bitter thoughts of, and spoken bitter words to Jesus, instead of thinking gentle, loving thoughts of the gentle loving Jesus; instead of speaking kind, loving words to our kind, loving Lord. It is strange, indeed one of the strangest

things in existence, that those who have the faith should forget, should hardly seem to believe our Lord's words, should seem never to have heard that He will take what we do to others as done to Himself. Let us commence at once daily, hourly, to meditate on this grand truth.

Let us not be bent upon grand theoretical thoughts of doing good to others, of saving souls, of getting souls out of purgatory, and all the time forgetting there are those around us wanting acts of charity, wanting kind thoughts, which thoughts will show themselves in a kind look, a kind smile. There are numbers round us wherever we go wanting a kind word, a kind action, and we do not give it to them, and we might do so much good. We might make so many hearts kinder and more charitable, loving God and loving one another better, because the kind word and kind action has put them in mind of God, and made them love Him because of the loveable hearts He has made. Why is it people are not always ready with the kind word? Why

do they harbour unkind thoughts, thoughts that make them restless and dissatisfied, irritable, morose, unkind? Ah, we have said it elsewhere, but we must repeat it again, the greater part of the evils and sins about us arise from an uncharitable thought unrepressed. It is a real plague, an evil to be feared, to be prayed against, to be checked from childhood, to be done penance for. Ah, let us commence at once to check this terrible evil; let us keep it down by voluntary penance; let us mortify it at its very root; immediately we have an uncharitable thought let us say a prayer for the person of whom we have thought; let us kneel down and kiss the ground with the lips directly they have uttered an uncharitable word; let us, as saints have done, lick the ground with the tongue that has been used for a bad purpose.

O God, how is it we have so little respect for our bodies and their various members as to use them contrary to the will of the God who made them? Why do we abuse what God gave us

to use in His service? We are not our own, we are purchased at a great price. We belong to the God-Man; we are His property; He has given us this body, framed with such exquisite nicety, to be used in time, in this world, that it may be fitted in eternity to be in heaven. We are to ornament heaven. Do we think of that? We smile as we think of our poor weak selves, of our pusillanimous spirit, of our wavering resolves, of our constant relapses, of our low grovelling nature. Yes; we who know ourselves, we who know God with some little light from His own Spirit of light, we can scarcely credit that we can ever ornament heaven, when we feel and know ourselves to be a disgrace to the earth. How can *we* ornament heaven? It is wonderful, and yet, please God, we shall. O God, good God, we cry to You; bring us to You. We want to please You both in time and in eternity; we want to work our way through all difficulties, through all seeming hindrances, to heaven. I say seeming difficulties, seeming hindrances,

because many seeming hindrances are really helps. All things work together to good to those who love God. We can always increase in perfection, in the sanctification of our souls, by the things that we call difficulties. They will help us to ornament heaven; the hard things of earth make beauties for heaven. What matter if the way be strewn with thorns here, if those thorns will give us roses with which for eternity we may be able to strew Jesus' path in heaven? What will matter the trouble it was to us to curb our passions, to use bit and bridle to master the passions, which seemed inclined to run away with our good will and reason, and to turn wild our whole nature? God help us. We grow breathless in the endeavour, we lose heart, we are discouraged, we fall so often, and are so wounded. It seems as though nothing but a miracle of grace could save us. "I cannot forgive such an one;" "I cannot feel charitable;" "I cannot help it." Poor troubled soul. You go not the right way to work; your feelings are in a great measure beyond

your control; you cannot make yourself *feel* love; you cannot always hinder the *feeling* of dislike, but you can do what is better than *feeling* love, you can do love's works, and bye-and-bye mayhap will come the feeling, and if not, never mind. Every time a judging thought arises in your mind, and an uncharitable thought, with all its uncomfortable effects, crush it out at once with a prayer for the person to whom it referred. Let it come as often as it will, still let the prayer be said, and not only a prayer for the person, but for all in the world in like temptation as yourself. Why is it we can use energy and earnestness about everything, and are so callous when the grand matter of living on earth in such a manner as to be fitted for heaven is in question? God help us all. Are we in our lives striving to do on earth as the blessed do in heaven? The one atmosphere of heaven is love, beautiful love, love which is so powerful in its weak fitful state on earth.

What is that love of heaven? We cannot understand here. In heaven we

shall breathe love; we shall love the great almighty, all-holy, all-loving God; yes, we shall love Him indeed with a wondrous, all-absorbing, intense love, a very passion of love, different indeed from the passion of love on earth, not alone in degree, in kind, but in contentment, in supreme satisfaction that we are loved by the Object we love infinitely more than we love It. Yes, we are never satisfied on earth. We are sometimes disappointed in the object we love; we find what we did not expect in it; or we are afraid of losing our earthly love, that it may change or die; but in heaven our highest expectations are realized, they are entirely surpassed. God satisfies us; we are perfectly content; we are in peace, wondrous peace. Our love causes no disquiet as earthly loves ever do. Oh no, we are peacefully, happily content; ah, and even here on earth have not some few of God's lovers a foretaste of that peace, that content? Jesus comes to the soul that is divested of itself, that is immolated for Him and His, that has no unchari-

tableness in it, but is full of His own love for others, His sacrificing love. Jesus comes in holy communion to that soul, and a quiet content fills it. No raptures, no ecstasies, no visions, no hearing of mysterious words. But there are other souls that we grieve to think are not deriving the profit they should, that are ignorant that they are so displeasing to their God, that think themselves better than they are, and approach very frequently to that holy sacrament and communion of love neither to give nor to get the love they should. Who would like to think that their souls cause disgust to Jesus? Who would like to have some nastiness, some evil odour, some impurity about them, to bring to the sweet, pure, lovely Lord in this sweet sacrament, (in which He condescends so greatly to the clean of heart,) thus shamefully abusing His condescension? Ah, let all, let the highest, or seemingly highest in grace, examine themselves and see, and beg for light that they may see whether there be any hidden sins in their soul. Those we are

aware of our dear compassionate Lord will not be aware of; He will not consider them; He will send sweet sorrow into the soul to wash them away. But those which from carelessness and negligence we do not know, those we will not see, those it is He will be displeased with, and it is certain that one of the worst of these hidden sins, and one of the most common, is uncharitableness.

Let us not be disturbed if we are afraid we have fallen into this too common error and fault, but let us go and bury our heads in the lap of our Mother, let us hide ourselves under her mantle, and let us beg that she will help us to thank our good God, who has made known to us what it is that has hindered our communions from being what they should be, moments of intense joy to Jesus, and calm content to ourselves. We certainly are not to look for any sensible feeling in holy communion, and we must bear with patience any aridity Jesus may send: but we may certainly look into ourselves, into our conscience, to see if we are giving that

pleasure to Jesus we should give; and dryness may be, and most often is, the consequence of unperceived venial sin, unperceived of course through our own fault, and most especially is it a punishment for sins of uncharitableness. We know indeed it is a great mistake to look for sensible feelings of devotion, it is so often from mere natural sentiment and not the effect of grace; but a certain contentment we may look for, a certain feeling that we are fulfilling the will of God and pleasing Him. This we may and ought to have. Now holy communion is meant to be a union. The souls most united to Jesus may perhaps feel the least sensible effect of holy communion; it is simply an increase of their habitual union. Jesus really never left them, so they have not the feeling which a poor sinner has whose soul has been haunted by evil spirits, and then experiences the visit of its Lord to its purified soul. This soul may well weep, it may well be filled with no ordinary devotion: the change is so great. It is unaccustomed to heavenly intercourse;

it has been used to be a mere instrument in the devil's hand: and now to be relieved from the cruel slavery of the devil, to be under the sweet dominion of Jesus, to be so taken from its usual habits, customs, and thoughts, and for a brief time to be in harmony with the will of its Creator, for a brief time to be in its proper place in creation, that is, in union with God, the end for which all rational creatures were made. Oh, that indeed acts forcibly upon the poor soul, and takes it as it were out of itself.

But those who go frequently to holy communion should go with the one intent of more closely cementing their union with their Lord, of persevering, of giving glory to God, which they know they can do by this act of holy communion more than by any other, and they must be satisfied with the simple content they feel at the thought of Jesus being with them and strengthening them, of Jesus being their support, of their being able by means of their union with their Lord to offer to His and their Heavenly Father perfect

adoration, perfect thanksgiving, perfect reparation for all their offences, and of their having a right to obtain whatever they ask. All this should be at holy communion; but if the soul does not feel satisfied, is not content, is not able to unite itself as it should to its Lord and God, let it examine itself, and in examining let it beg for light through the sweet Mother of lights, and humble itself with some penances for the obtaining light, and it will probably discover that some hidden sin is there, and probably the sin of uncharitableness. If then we would have happy communions, if we would have Jesus pleased with us, let us be charitable even to scrupulosity. To be scrupulous where charity is concerned is not likely to do us any harm. Let our thoughts, our words, our whole being be pure because they are full of charity, full of love. Let all our littleness and meanness, I had almost said our nastiness, be burnt out with this heavenly fire of charity. Let us be as children of the God of love. Let us *know* that our future home in the next

world is the heaven of love, by already doing on earth as the blessed do in that home above,—love, love, love.

What takes place? A certain quiet content. Jesus Thou art wonderful, but most wonderful, not in Thy wondrous glory and splendour, not in the radiant majesty of Thy sacred Humanity, but wonderful in Thy quiet hiddenness in the sweet sacrament. Thou puttest on nothing to attract us, Thou dost not speak, Thou sayest not one word of love: but Thou comest to us and we are content, unless indeed there be a bar placed between the soul and Thee by its own imperfection, unless the soul, though in a state of grace, be still not capable of entertaining Thee, of being united to Thee as Thou wouldst have it to be, because its thoughts, desires, and wishes are different from those Thou wouldst it should have; so that in Thy visit Thou canst not draw it to Thyself as Thou wouldst. This soul may perhaps be judging others and overlooking its own sins; it may be harbouring hard thoughts of others; it may be

cruelly suspecting others wrongfully ; it may be doing to others the very opposite to what it would wish to be done to itself : and thus it may come with its self-sufficient, judging heart, its unforgiving spirit, to the gentle, humble-hearted Jesus, with His loving, forgiving spirit, and Jesus, in His love of obedience, His love of the law He has Himself laid down, Jesus comes at the word of His priest, He comes to that soul, and though He breaks not the ordinary law of His eucharistic life, and speaks not audibly to that soul, saying, "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye," still none the less clearly does He cause that soul to feel that all is not right.

It is wonderful the content found by the unselfish soul in that little circle of the Blessed Sacrament. It is not wonderful that the thought of the great God's love, the thought of the home He has prepared for us, the thought that He really intends us to be in that home

with Him if we do His will should cause us such contentment when we know we are striving to do His will, and so may without presumption hope to go to heaven, and indeed are bound to hope for it and look for it. It is not wonderful that this hope should be such a contentment to us; but it *is* wonderful that within that small white circle, the little Host placed within our mouth by the hand of the priest, it is wonderful the content that follows even when Jesus seems to be hiding Himself from us as much as He can. Yes, He hides Himself in order that we may simply exercise our faith, and pray to Him by faith; still, there He is, the dear, dear Jesus, our own dear Lord; He cannot be hidden, and our soul quietly joins itself to the Author of its being, without excitement, without fuss of preparation or entertainment; it lies quietly conscious that it possesses its Saviour, its eternal reward, its sweet peace and calm content: and you who feel this not, search and see, and you will find, that is to say if you search faithfully, de-

pending on light from God, and not trusting your own judgment, you will find, I say, that your soul is stained most likely with uncharitableness, not with deadly sin. Oh no, you may never stain your soul with mortal sin, and yet your soul may be more displeasing to our Lord when He comes than those would be who have habitually committed mortal sin. And why? Because poor sinners who by reason of temptation or habit have often fallen into mortal sin, but are very careful to cleanse their souls before they approach Jesus, really do, by their sorrow and penance, render their souls more pleasing to Jesus, and make Him more content with His visit, and therefore the souls themselves are more content than other so-called good persons who, though they have no mortal sin to be sorry for, yet are not truly sorry for the sins they have. They are not aware perhaps of any deliberate sin. They examine themselves and find they have not lied, or wilfully omitted any duty, but they pass over their uncharitable thoughts. They remember

having spoken an uncharitable word to or of some one; they make an act of contrition for that, but the uncharitable thought that caused the uncharitable word, the root of the evil, oh, that is quite disregarded, there is no act of contrition made for that; the soul approaches the altar with the nasty stain upon it, the nasty odour exhaling from it, and Jesus comes to that soul with its unpleasantness; it draws near to Him with its defilement, its bad odour, its incipient rottenness, its disorder which is certain in time to turn to a disease if it is not stayed. Oh, how sad it is, how sad. We watch the altar rails, and we see the poor, humble, sorrowful sinners approaching and returning, and we rejoice with our Jesus. We tell Him we are pleased at His pleasure; we are glad for His joy.

CONFERENCE VII.

Dear sisters, we are now assembled together to think and consider, in the presence of our dear Lord, the object of our being together, of our being in this place, of our being separated from friends and relations. Now let us in a prayerful spirit cluster at our dear Lord's feet, beg the holy angels to keep distractions from us, beg our Blessed Lady to throw her mantle round us, and thus, secure from the world, from the devil, from our weak selves, beg a light from God, beg that His Holy Spirit may breathe upon our souls, and renew within us the holy resolutions and desires He has before given us. Heart of Mary, breathe a prayer for thy children; wish, for thy wish will be granted, for those who will be faithful to the grace, a touch from the hand of God.

Why are we here? Solely and entirely to please Jesus. We might have

saved our souls in the world without sacrificing ourselves, or withdrawing ourselves from it as now. No, we have come here to do the very most we can for God ; we have come to lead a life of self-denial, a life of devotion, of self-immolation, for the good of souls ; but first and foremost to render our own souls pure and pleasing, bright and beautiful, dear to the Heart of God, whose delight is in them. "Get Me a pure heart, and that is the place of My abode." Ah, dear sisters, can Jesus say of one of us, "I have found a pure heart, My delight is in it, it is the place of My abode"? Let us not be down-hearted as we see, with the bright light of God's purity shining upon us, how very different our hearts are from what we could wish them, from what we know Mary wishes them, from what we know God wishes them.

Let us resolve that our souls shall be bright and our hearts pure, that our lives, though perhaps filled with little every day actions, common-place enough to others, shall be, though the beauty

be hidden from others, beautiful in the sight of God. "All the beauty of the king's daughter is within." Let us secretly, silently work the grand work of our sanctification. We sometimes almost complain that we have not one thing or another that would help us on our road, helps that other religious have. Now we cannot fathom the designs of Providence. If God leaves us to ourselves more than other religious He can Himself supply our need; and if we are anxious to advance quickly in the way of perfection, it always depends more upon ourselves than upon others. See in the world holy, nay saintly, people, who have but one holy communion a week, who can seldom visit the Blessed Sacrament, and yet see how they advance; and then let us be ashamed that under the very same roof with our Blessed Lord, Who night and day is watching over us, protecting, loving us, waiting with hands filled with graces to bestow upon us, we can yet be so selfish, so full of ourselves, so little filled with Jesus. For every effect there is a

cause. What is the cause, then, why we, here in the presence of God and the holy angels, must acknowledge that we have not corresponded with the graces of God? Now all the saints without exception tell us that the one way of advancing in the royal road of pleasing and loving God is by self-denial; nay, the catechism of the Council of Trent tells us that the daily life of every Christian, even the ordinary Christian, should be one of penance. What then of us who are to be bound by vow to a life of self-denial? What should we be doing? Now we are but children in the spiritual life. We are at this time meditating upon our Lord's infancy and childhood; a good time for us to commence what He at this time commenced, a life of self-denial. Let us learn from Him the three great lessons He taught us from the crib to the cross,—meekness, humility, obedience. Let us dwell especially upon the latter.

Watch the obedience of Jesus. What a lesson for us. He remains quietly wherever our Lady places Him; He

does not seek to be here or there, but remains simply obedient to her and St. Joseph. Naturally being full of zeal for God's glory, He might wish to convert the world, to speak beautiful things of God which would fill hearts with His love, but He is silent, obedient, hidden, unknown. Oh, let us learn from this; let us imitate our dear Lord. Let us place ourselves in the hands of Mary, let us do simply what we are told. Let us not examine what we are told to do, let us take all things as coming from the hands of God. Let us not look at creatures as we do; let us look to God. Let us not think when asked to do something, either by our mother or by a sister, that they have asked us to do it, but let us think God asks it. Let us not think that such and such a person has not a good intention in what they ask us to do, but let us think simply it is the Will of God we should do it. The people who put our Lord to death had not a good intention in what they did; but nevertheless Jesus put Himself meekly into their hands, knowing it

to be the Will of His heavenly Father that He should submit to them and suffer death.

We must learn a lesson of self-denial from the Infant Jesus, for it was at this Christmas time He first began to practise self-denial: in heaven He could not practise self-denial. He denied Himself constantly in what His human nature would have craved for; He denied Himself in His wish to comfort and bestow great pleasures on His Mother and on St. Joseph, instead of seeing them suffering from hunger, poverty, absolute want; He denied Himself the pleasure of conversing with them; He denied Himself the use of His limbs, of all that we naturally love, for it must be ever recollected that our Lord, though seemingly like other children, was unlike them in having the full use of His faculties. Thus we may imitate Him. We are not children, but we have to be as obedient and humble as little children, like the little children of wise good parents, who have taught their children the lesson of obedience by

making them obey in little matters as well as in great, simply to inculcate the grand principle of obedience, knowing well the responsibility of having children entrusted to their care, and knowing also that those in command sin by participation if, having given a command, they do not see that it is obeyed. It is the children of such parents we must be like; we are not to examine the reason of commands, we are simply to obey, and obey, not because we must, but cheerfully, to be like our Lord. It must be the same with other virtues: let us not, for instance, bear our crosses because we must, but let us take them as we should take whatever comes from the hands of God.

There are three signs which usually accompany a soul that is descending rather than ascending the ladder of perfection. One is uncharitableness: the manners, or the speech, or the actions of others displease us; we permit ourselves to think of this, and then we speak of it, either to the person who displeases us or to some other, and thus we spread

the sad plague of uncharitableness, and sow the seeds of discord. The other sign is when we find ourselves slothful about performing hidden acts, little things known only to our Lord and ourselves. Oh, the happy soul that has secrets with Jesus, things, little acts, unknown to all but the Heart of Jesus. The third is, when we are fretful, impatient, and do not love our own company, that is to say, do not love our Lord's company, because whenever a religious is alone she is bound, by her solemn consecration of all her faculties to God, to think of Jesus, to draw Him close to her; she is bound to watch over her heart, and be as careful of her thoughts as of her words. For every idle word we have to give account. Now this does not mean the words carelessly said at recreation to amuse others, to relieve ourselves from the grave thoughts which should occupy our minds at other times. No; the idle word is the deliberate indulgence of self, which could hardly be, or rather with far more difficulty, in the case of a religious than

of one living in the world. Every word spoken without necessity in silence time is of course an idle word, and will have to be accounted for at the day of judgment. Let us recollect these three things which ruffle the abode of rest our Lord desires in our hearts. Let us be careful of the uncharitable thought as well as uncharitable word or act. Let us be careful of living in God's presence, performing our actions, not to the eye as pleasing men, but as pleasing God, remembering that one act in religion, where all is obedience, is as good as another, and that it is a sad delusion to hurry and do badly one action in order that we may have more time to perform another better.

All we do is for God ; if no one sees what we do but He, so much the better. Let us remember to watch our hearts, and banish from them all vain and idle thoughts ; let us ever have some good thought in our minds ; let us constantly have a prayer on our lips, and thus the devil will not be able to deceive us. It is when we are distracted, thinking of

numberless useless things, that he steals in and disturbs the peace of our souls by all kinds of suggestions and disturbing thoughts, whereas the Spirit of God is a Spirit of peace. Now let us all make three resolutions. One is to be particular about the beginning and end of the day. Let the first thought and action of the day be for God. If we can hardly think because we are weak and ill, let us repeat constantly the names of Jesus and Mary, that will help us to do what poor human nature of itself could not do. Help me, Jesus; Mary, protect and be with me this day. Then at the end of the day our last thoughts are of our meditation; we visit the Blessed Sacrament, we tell our Blessed Lord we are going from Him, we must leave Him, and yet we do not wish to, so we ask Him to remain in our hearts all night; we offer our Lady's Heart to Him to supply for our poor cold hearts; and we leave the church quietly, recollectedly, and we rest the night through with our Lord, we sleep in God's presence. We know God is everywhere,

but perhaps through the busy hours of the day it is not so forcibly brought home to us as when we enter into solitude at night with God and know that not closer is our head to our pillow, as perhaps wearily we press it, than we are close to God, and rest in His loving embrace; nay closer still, we are in God as the fish in the water; nay more, we are immersed in Him, the great God has His throne in our hearts, the favoured place of His abode. "If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him." No mother watches her sleeping babe as she gently rocks its cradle as the great good God of love watches those who rest peacefully, happily, trustingly, knowing they are watched and cared for by the good providence of the loving Creator, in whom they live, move, and have their being.

CONFERENCE VIII.

Dear sisters, let us to-day think for a short time seriously of the purpose for which we have come here, our special work, and if we are fulfilling the end for which, if we have a vocation to this special work, God created us, and which in the mind of God was from all eternity designed for us.

Let us begin by each and every one of us silently praying in our hearts that we may derive benefit from what we are considering, that Jesus, in whose presence we sit to think for a short time what it is we have come here to do, what it is He asks of us, that He, Jesus our Lord and Master, to whom we hope one day to be bound by vow, may now please to bless us, and help us in the endeavours we are all making to render ourselves less unfit to be one day solemnly consecrated by the Church as the spouses of Christ. Yes, Jesus our Lord and Love, we invoke

Thee, we appeal to Thee, by the love Thou hast for the Heart of Thy Mother, pour forth now upon us Thy Holy Spirit, remove from our hearts what hinders the reception of Thy graces. Heart of Jesus, beating now within the tabernacle with burning love for each one of us, with love of the immensity of which we have no adequate conception, since it is the love of God, let us feel that love, let us for one moment realize it, let us, calmed, subdued by that happy thought of the intense love of Jesus for us, rest quietly and peacefully in Him.

Do we think enough of our Lord's presence with us? Do we think of that silent, patient, loving One, who is now looking upon us with such wondrous love, who, when we leave His presence watches us in our work all over the house, nay even when we leave it? If we do think of it, what are we doing for Him? Are we making His abode with us a happy one, that is to say, speaking in our human way of speaking, are we doing what we would do to one who

lived with us, who dearly loved us, and whom we loved above the whole world ? There need not a great many things to be done to please Jesus, but one thing is necessary,—love. Love, and do what you will. Surely we shall love if we constantly recollect we are loved ; let us continually remind ourselves of this happy thought,—Jesus loves me. Yes, unworthy that I am, sinful, full of imperfections, Jesus loves me. Fall again and again as I may and do, He still loves me. The patience of creatures may be exhausted, but the patience of our Creator, our Redeemer, Jesus, will never be. He loved us first, He loves us now, He will love us to the end, if we give Him but a little love. But why should we give to Him niggardly, parsimoniously, when He gives to us plentifully, infinitely ? Can we give nothing to Him verily and indeed ? Yes, we *can*. Let us now say that by His grace we not only *can*, but we *will*.

When God's saint wished to give to his God, a voice spoke, telling him to put his hand into his bosom and he

would find a gift for his God. Let us do this. But then, if we would offer our hearts to God, shall we offer one that is altogether unworthy of Him, one stained, soiled, one that beats more for its worthless possessor than for God, one that loves itself before God, one that prefers its own way and will to God's way and His holy will? Oh no, do not let us do this. Let us examine our hearts, let us bring them to the sweet, pure Heart of Mary, and ask our Mother to unite them to hers, and thus offer our gift to God. That is how we may please Jesus, that is what we have come together to do, to renew the life of Mary, to have but one heart and soul, and that Mary's, to form one united body, bound together to represent before God in heaven, before our dear Lord here present with us on earth, the life of that one blessed above all, the sweet simple life of Mary. To do this we must search within ourselves, we must dig, we must go to the very core, we must go to our hearts, we must constantly beg our Mother to give us her

Heart. Let us before all we do constantly renounce our own selves, that Jesus may see Mary in us, that is to say, if for instance we recite the office, let us unite ourselves with Mary, so that our united prayer and praise may ascend before our Lord, and be something like the breathings of Mary's Heart.

God looked upon a world of sinners, and "He loved them, unlovely as they were," and He left the company of the angels of heaven to live in the company of sinners on earth. The charity in His Heart bore with them, He did not shrink from them, and He would have us imitate Him in this grand charity, for "though we have faith that will move mountains, and have not charity, it will profit us nothing. Charity is kind, is patient, envieth not, is not puffed up, dealeth not perversely."

Let us then examine ourselves upon all that is likely to render our souls displeasing to Jesus. Are we truthful in word and work? are we self-sacrificing? or are we unmortified, afraid of labour, shrinking from little discomforts and

practices of self-denial necessarily entailed by the life we have chosen, and to which we trust we are called by God? Let us not hide from ourselves by excuses what it is so much better for ourselves that we should know. Let us ask of God light to know ourselves, and that He will give us an ever contrite heart. Thus shall we go on in the way we have begun, the happy way by which, dying to ourselves, we live to God, and are permitted to be His special friends, to live constantly in His presence, to be the guardians and adorers of His Sacred Humanity on earth, for it is our first, our great duty to adore, love, and praise the God who dwells ever with us, seeming to do nothing else but love us. Let us, as we chant His praises, which is the happy duty of those who are chosen to be His spouses, let us pour our whole soul out before Him, let us surround His altar, offering our prayers and praise, let us offer love. How happy we are to be allowed to sing the praises of God, how happy we are to be allowed to be so constantly in His

presence, how happy we are to possess Him the desired of all nations, whom the patriarchs and prophets of old so longed to see. Let us now bow down to adore our God on earth, the God whom it will be our happiness to adore for ever in heaven; let us in holy communion, and now spiritually, take Him into our hearts, who will enfold us in His everlasting embrace of love; let us press close to our own poor hearts the Sacred Heart of love possessed by us in holy communion; let us, putting aside self, remain quiet, holding communion with the great God who has made Himself so little for love of us, who abides ever with us, who has loved us from all eternity, who loves us now, not with a weak, wavering love, such as ours on earth, but with the love of God, the love of the God whose very being is love, whose love created us, whose love has made Him remain ever with us, and who is now desiring to enter our hearts and to whisper to each little soul that He is desiring to make all His own, "I have loved thee with an everlasting

love, therefore have I drawn thee to Myself, taking pity on thee ; the bridegroom shall rejoice over his bride, and thy God will rejoice over thee."

He is here, He is looking upon us. We would that He would speak to us, and He will. "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." Jesus, we would have more of Thy blessed peace ; we would that it should fill and replenish our whole being. Mother of Jesus, beg of Jesus to fill us with heavenly peace. Our Mother speaks to us, and tells us again that in proportion as we are emptied of self peace will come. Let us cast from us now whatever there is in us that disturbs the reign of Jesus in our hearts ; let us beg pardon of God for whatever is in us displeasing to Him ; let us ask forgiveness for whatever part of us is not given to Him ; let us search into ourselves that we may know ourselves in order to purify our hearts, and until we do thus know ourselves let us beg pardon of God for whatever there is in us displeasing to His all-pure, all-holy eyes, though it

may be unknown to ourselves. "From my secret sins," cried the holy psalmist, "O Lord, deliver me." There may be within us roots of sin we are utterly unconscious of. There may be self-love that needs contradicting, there may be vanity that needs mortifying, there may be pride that needs humbling, there may be resentment that needs subduing, there may be suspicions and rash judgments, there may be uncharitableness that needs greater love of Jesus to correct it; for if we love our dear Lord we must love those for whom He died, and if we say we love Him and at the same time do not love our neighbour, we lie, the truth is not in us, Jesus is not with us. We have not true charity if we love only the amiable and the good, our charity is not like that of God, God in His glorious heaven. We must help one another. If a sister is tempted, and the devil overcomes her, all in the community lose by her loss. If one sister does not go to holy communion the whole community suffers. We are now united, we must ever be so; a house

divided against itself cannot stand. We must cling to one another, we must look for help to one another, we must expect and receive it. Those who row together in a boat all pull one way, they must do so if they would get on. So with us, we must pull together or we shall be upset, and I pray that any house where charity does not reign supreme may be broken up, that it may be cut off from Mary's little company, may it be disconnected from its root, and cast off like a branch of a vine separated from its parent stem, wither, and cease to exist in God's garden the Church. But let us all pray this may never be, let us earnestly invoke the God of love to bestow upon us the Holy Spirit of love, that love may reign in our hearts, that within Mary's homes there may be ever a happy halo of heavenly love, that possessing it ourselves, we may pour from our abundance upon others, and thus may imitate the God of love. In heaven above from all eternity there were three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Father love, the

Son love, the Holy Spirit love, Their life an uninterrupted, unceasing, everlasting blissful love and complacency in Their life of infinite love. From eternity this had been the life of the Three Divine Persons alone existing; no creature existed upon whom to pour out Their love. Then this infinite ocean of love seems to have overflowed, and creation to have resulted, a creation created by love, a branch of an ungrowing eternity of love. The angels were created bright spirits of love, they received love, they likewise imitate their Creator as far as they can, they pour out their love upon others, they pour it out upon us. Thus let us imitate, let us follow the example of heaven, let us do on earth as they do in heaven, let us lead lives of love at home, our home which is the sanctuary where the God of love dwells in His sacrament of love, seeming to do nothing but love us; let us likewise make that home truly in the sanctuary of Mary's Heart by our own imitation of it, by each possessing something that was in her Heart, so that

Mary may indeed seem to live again in her children. One may possess one virtue more than another, but we must each strive to obtain all, and our deficiency in one thing may be made up by our sister, so that we may offer to our Lord the virtues of our sister as though they were our own. "For the sake of David turn not away Thy face." We must make this prayer, saying to our Lord, "For the sake of Mary Thy hand-maid turn not away from me." We may likewise with joy show to Jesus that some of those to whom we are joined have virtues we have not, and that we wish to rejoice with Him for having given to others His grace, and beg of Him to bestow grace upon us in like manner. This will be a practice of humility which may be as pleasing to Jesus as the offering of some one more perfect than ourselves, who may indeed have had greater grace, and therefore Jesus expects more from her; some one who may perhaps have used less faithfully the grace given than you who have had less. But you must likewise bring

your store to the general stock, you must beg for that first and principal virtue, without which there can be none at all; you must beg that if you have so little in you, like Mary, to bring before Jesus, at least that you may have a share in her humility, that you may truthfully see yourself as you are in the sight of Jesus.

CONFERENCE IX.

We are all, dear sisters, bound together to accomplish a certain work; we must all therefore have that work at heart, we must all be anxious to further it; we should each one be very sorry if we thought we retarded it in any way. We must then each put our shoulder to the wheel to assist and further what we are banded together to perform. God, when He wishes a certain thing done, usually signifies His will first, and then leaves to His creatures to choose the way of setting about the work, and success depends very much on their

efforts. So then it is left to us to accomplish or to mar whatever work of God we are engaged in. The success of a work indeed does not ultimately depend upon us. We may work as ably as we can, and yet not succeed; but it is certain we shall not succeed if we do not do our best. But God seemingly leaves to us the success of His works. It is good of Him to do so. We love to think that by working we can further His glory. We love to think we are doing something for Him. It seems that God in His goodness, knowing that if we love Him we shall really wish to do something for Him, has granted this desire of our hearts, as He has so many others. There is not a desire, that is to say a good desire of our hearts that God has not given us means of fulfilling; and the bad desires are really excess, or defect of good, or desires that would be good if bent upon their proper object. So this desire to do something for God can be fulfilled like every other. We can do something for God by every act of charity we perform to our neighbour.

God puts Himself in the place of our neighbour. A cup of cold water alone is remembered gratefully by the good God as though it were given to Himself. Think of this, and resolve to perform every day many little acts of charity as though to our dear Lord Himself, and resolve likewise to constantly perform some action purely to please God, not of necessity, but with cheerfulness, joyously exulting in the thought that we little creatures of earth are able to do something to please the great good Creator of heaven and earth.

Now we must not seek about for many new strange things to do. We must do all we do *well*. Especially must we regard any special charge entrusted to us as a sacred thing, as God's will in our regard. Now I would ask you to consider attentively what I am going to put before you. "God has fashioned and put together every part of the universe" in exquisite order. Go where we will, look into every nook and corner of the earth, there we shall find law and order; in our own bodies reigns this

law, this order; and when it is broken, when a limb, for instance, is dislocated, see what pain ensues.

It would much increase our love of God if we could only see Him working everywhere; if, for instance, in taking a beautiful flower we saw how beautifully every part is ordered. If we could look into the depths of the ocean we should see the same laws given and observed, a special arrangement, a special purpose in everything. All nature is beautiful by reason of this order. All is spoilt where there is disorder. Now God, in giving laws to inanimate things, does not give them the power of disobeying,—the sun must shine, the moon must give her light, and so on; but man has this tremendous power of saying, "I will not serve;" and too often he does say it, and breaks the wise loving laws framed by the great Legislator, the good, good God, and therefore we see disorder has come into human society, which otherwise would have been so happy. God's laws have been, and are, broken every day. Those who on

earth make laws are forced to have their officers, who shall see that the laws are observed, and punish when they are disobeyed. God needs no policemen. His punishment follows, or rather accompanies, the breach of His laws, as naturally as pain does when a part of the human body is disordered. We see that every community, every body of people have seen the necessity of making laws and enforcing their observance. Society could not exist without this, and the well-being of every state consists in each part doing its appointed work conscientiously. The whole world is now overrun with evil from the sad effects of rulers and subjects both equally neglecting to perform their duty, not understanding the responsibility of their position, the rulers not making laws from conscientious motives, but from motives of expediency, and subjects only obeying when they please, and from self-interest, evading the law and disobeying when it seems to them that their own purposes will be

forwarded by so doing, if only it can be done with some hope of impunity.

But to return to our more immediate subject. In every monastery and convent there is a great love of law and regularity, as there is in the Church itself, which in this respect follows the example of God who established her. As the well-being of a state consists in all performing their appointed duties well, so in community all the members are bound to perform their charge conscientiously, carefully, "not to the eye as pleasing men, but as pleasing God." Now we have all, every one of us, a good will to perform well whatever duty is given us, but still we do not take it quite in the serious light we should. We think it sufficient excuse to say, "Oh, I forgot;" whereas old experienced religious would not take that as an excuse at all. "A religious should never forget." Now the reason of this is that each appointed duty of the religious is considered by her as a sacred thing. If we were to see our Blessed Lord, and He were to say to us, "My child, do this

work, have charge of this affair for Me," how careful we should be. But this really is the case, God as truly wants that special work of us as though we saw Him visibly, and heard Him say, "Go, do this work for Me." How we should work, how careful we should be, if His sweet voice had indeed but once in our lives spoken to us, if we had but once seen the gentle face of Jesus beckoning us to His service, and asking, as God ever does when He wishes us to do something for Him, as though it were a favour, as though He would be grateful to us for doing it; not as it is in truth, as a duty, as it is indeed a duty to do all we can for Him. Now we are all engaged in what time will show is a very great work for God; we are building a new edifice in the Church, we are adding a fresh glory to it.

Our Lord is specially interested in what is raised to the special honour of His Mother, in what is so like Himself that it may indeed be called a Christ-like work, since it is to save even at the last moment souls for whom He suffered

and died, souls who would be lost for ever if His mercy had not inspired His Mother to use her power to plead again on earth in her children, to plead with power by her right as Mother, since it is to the Motherhood of Mary we are devoted, Mary, Mother of Jesus, Mother of men, Mother of God's Church. Yes, we know it is necessarily a work of mercy, it is to imitate that greatest work of mercy the world has ever seen or ever could see, the work effected on Calvary by the death of Jesus. It is to Calvary we are devoted, it is the death of Jesus by which we plead in union with our Mother. We are not to think of ourselves, we put ourselves on one side; we are to plead from Mary's Heart, the Heart of Mary Virgin, joyous, unspeakably blissful; the Heart of Mary Mother, broken, unutterably grief-worn, sorrowful. Our own selves might make us think, if we looked at the fact in a human way, that it is impossible God would choose such as we are to work so great a work for Him, but we must look at the matter from God's point of view,

and we know how God delights to choose the weak things of the world to confound the strong. We must think that we are the rubbish thrown into the foundation. And now to return to that from which I have been digressing, though I had an object in doing so. We are all necessary to this work, we have each to do our part. It does not depend upon one person alone, it depends upon each one. We must all strive to do our best in laying the foundation of the new temple of God on earth in the best manner possible, and we must assist one another. We must not leave all the work to one. For instance, we must all assist our mother, and believe that success depends as much on our efforts as it does on hers. We must endeavour in every way to do so. We all are, I know, as regards material work, anxious to do our best, but this is not the principal thing in the matter at all.

We might endeavour each to keep the few rules more exactly. To every rule attached a special grace ; if we lose

one we lose a chain, we give room to temptation. If we kept our rules better, and were at the special place and time appointed, we should avoid temptation. The devil has less power over us when we are in the place God has appointed for us. We might remind one another, and principally, as I have said, in the discharge of our particular office. It may be a very little one, it may be so small that we may think it insignificant, as perhaps it is apparently, but life is made up of trifles. It is precisely on the performing these small actions that the well-being of the house depends. A certain sister may for instance have simply to see that the Angelus bell is rung. It may be she sometimes forgets it, or rings it at a wrong time. Now not only should this be regarded as a fault, but she should also think of the disedification given to those in the neighbourhood; they expect nuns to be as punctual as clock-work. In most neighbourhoods they would regulate their work by the convent bell. Such an apparent trifle

would lead those around to the inference that the sisters here are irregular and disorderly, and that, for the honour of our Lady, we do not want. The good, the well-being, of course, of every community consists, not alone in having a good head, but in every office being filled by officials who faithfully discharge their appointed duty, and the principal duty of every superior is necessarily the appointing of proper people to the proper place, and seeing that every office is filled by one who can be trusted.

This it is that makes up the well-being of a house, that every one has their appointed duty, that each one feels she is a part of the work, part of the community, every one filled with a feeling of responsibility and a desire of faithfully fulfilling that part of the common duties with which she is entrusted. In one sense every one is as useful as another; the head needs the arms, the arms the head, and so on. We must convince ourselves of this necessity of all uniting in the common

work, to help, not so much in the amount done, as in its being well done. A little leak will sink a great ship. We must do whatever is appointed us faithfully, for these are the words of God, and His words are strong, "Cursed is he who doeth the work of the Lord negligently;" but blessed is the faithful one who after labour will hear, "Well done, good and faithful one, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Sweet will be the words, sweeter still the voice of Jesus; but sweet will be the love above all human knowledge with which Jesus, drawing that happy soul to Himself in one long everlasting embrace, will imprint upon it the kiss of unchanging, joyous, heavenly peace.

CONFERENCE X.

If I understand God's designs right, He desires our Lady's Little Company to represent to Him human life as He originally intended it, a natural life: and it is out of place to say, "No, we are to lead supernatural lives;" because natural life was always intended by God to be supernatural in so far as man was created in a state of grace, and not of nature. But I use the word *natural*, not in the strict sense of the word; I mean a life such as God intended for Adam and Eve and their posterity, a simple life, not an extraordinary one, but a very simple one, nature being under the entire control of grace, and with one single end in view, the greater glory of God. Such should be the life of religious, for religion means a binding again, and those who embrace this life are bound again to God, for the original bond was broken

by sin. But that is not an extraordinary thing, it is a very natural thing to be so bound. If Adam and Eve had not sinned we should all have been thus bound, that is to say, we should have belonged so entirely to God, we should ever have felt so consecrated to Him, that the formal binding by vow would not have been necessary; we should have been as little children playing before a loving God, sporting and abounding in our liberty, in the life of love given by the good Creator to His happy creatures, and yet not selfish in our happiness, since every joy would have produced from God's sinless children an act of love and thanksgiving to their good Father; their own joys would but have made them rejoice the more in His.

The life of God's creatures, if sin had not entered God's good creation, would indeed have been religious, but it would not have been the life of restraint such as we now understand the life of a religious to be. Certainly the Incarnation introduced a new and different

kind of perfection than was intended by God in the beginning. Man had abused God's gift of liberty, of independence; man had abused both God's spiritual and temporal gifts; man chose to use his free will to disobey, he used a temporal gift of God when forbidden to do so. The evil introduced went on increasing, disobedience to God's laws became universal, the good gifts of God being continually abused. Our Lord came to restore all things. He chose obedience, He chose poverty, these being the fittest remedies for our fallen condition. All perfection must now necessarily consist in imitation of the Incarnate One, therefore we choose a life of obedience and poverty; but that need not destroy, it may and should tend rather to bring back to us our original gifts.

We wish in our Lady's Little Company to represent on earth the life of our Lord and of our Lady. The greater part of our Lord's life was made up of simple and, to outward appearance, natural actions; our Lady, too, was occupied in those of an ordinary kind. But whilst

outwardly occupied like other persons, what a difference was there interiorly ; what a life of love, suffering, and sacrifice there was within. Calvary had already begun in each Heart. Our Lord was ever the Man of Sorrows, even in His youth, when employed in His manual labours, with the light of love, with the glory and grandeur of His Heavenly Father's face shining from His own, and the peace of heaven beaming from His eyes, the eyes that hereafter would drop blood from the sharp thorns that would encircle the beautiful brow. Yes, Jesus was crucified from His youth upwards, and His Mother was crucified in heart with Him, and yet nothing exteriorly betrayed their sorrow. They did not show anything to their neighbours but an extraordinary love, a wonderfully peaceful gentle manner, a constantly happy countenance. Thus with Mary's own, the united company will together manifest to God the life of Jesus and Mary. Some of its members may be called by God to go through all the various states of life of our Lord

and our Lady; some more especially drawn to one of those states. One may, like their Mother, be called to an intense interior crucifixion of soul; it may be known to none but the director of that soul, the outward behaviour never betraying what is going on within. Another may be called to both severe interior and exterior sufferings; soul and body may be crucified together with their crucified Lord; her body may be wounded with the wounded body of Jesus; she may live in a constant union with Jesus on the cross; suffering may be her delight, poverty a pleasure, humiliation a joy. And yet this soul, so closely united with its Lord on Calvary, may differ exteriorly but little from the soul united with Jesus at Bethlehem, resting with the Infant Jesus on Mary's breast. The difference between the two would be principally seen in times of trouble and contradiction; the soul more united with Jesus on Calvary bearing heroically what the soul at Bethlehem, even with its arms round Mary's neck, would probably fret and complain

of. It seems that Calvary is the only seminary where perfect patience under injustice is taught. How many holy souls give way by complaining of the human agent through whom the injustice comes to them, excusing their indignation by wrongly applying the words of the Holy Ghost, "Be angry and sin not."

It is on Calvary that we learn, as we look upon Jesus and Mary, that there cannot be injustice for us, that we have none with whom we can be angry but ourselves, that it is impossible that we could receive an injustice. Oh, how happy should we be when an opportunity for suffering seeming injustice presents itself. The soul united with Jesus on the cross is prepared for this, it is not taken by surprise, it is hardly aware that it has anything to bear, and would be ashamed to think it is undergoing what others see that it really is undergoing. Oh, it is happy. There are some who would dread the thought of living all their life on Calvary: and yet, view the soul that has chosen that place for its abode, and see,

is it not the brightest, happiest, most constantly cheerful upon this earth? Is there anything austere, or sombre, or sad about it? No, indeed; it is ever joyous, it is the first to enliven the recreation, the first to cheer those who are sad, the last to complain of its own suffering, since indeed it can hardly acknowledge to itself, much less to others, in the face of Jesus agonizing, united to Jesus' loving Heart, that it really is suffering. It might discourage those who have never tasted the sweetness of Calvary, it might make them think their future life will be only heavy and sad; but how little they know, how little they know what the embrace of Jesus agonizing is like.

The Little Company of Mary has no strict rules of penance, etc., as it might be thought an order especially devoted to Calvary should have. No; the individual soul with its director will be left free and unencumbered by rules which are so wisely and prudently enforced in many ancient orders. "Let every spirit praise the Lord." Why

should there be this difference ? it may be asked : and it could be easily shown, as we have written elsewhere, that every order is as a flower in God's garden the Church, and meant to represent to Him some particular beauty, and that every flower should bloom after its kind. In our Little Company the Holy Spirit will fashion the saint at will. The various members may be all alike, and yet all different : all alike in simplicity, in liberty, in love, yet each differing in some particular way from the others, by being in a different spiritual state, or in its passage from one state to another ; and yet all will together make up a whole well pleasing to the good God. We contemplate and love our Blessed Lady at all times of her life, but do we think enough of that time she passed after the resurrection ? There may be many souls who imitate our Lady in a life-long peaceful sorrow, who at some time of their lives go through a fearful ordeal, a crucifixion, and then it has passed, (though the effect of that terrible time still abides in the soul till its last

earthly breath,) and then the remainder of the life seems to pass on without further trial. So in our Little Company there may be many who have passed through their crucifixion, who have bravely borne a fiery ordeal, and the remainder of their life is like the still, the solemn calm which succeeds the storm. And thus they may resemble our Blessed Lady in her work in the Church after the resurrection. See Mary with the young catechumens, see her at the bed of death, see her working with the apostles in her quiet, simple, hidden way. In what various ways may we not imitate her if we choose. There is so much could be done to help our overworked priests if we would. But the lay help so frequently sought by priests too often proves a source of worry to them; the pious ladies whom they engage to help them being not seldom changeable, capricious, and easily given to take offence; or else fussy, taking up the time of the poor priests with long conversations, or talkative to a degree. Of what incalculable service

would be sisters, walking in a quiet Mary-like way, with the simple straightforwardness of the true nun, who has but one end in life, to please her Love, to "make her Lord pleasing to those around," to work earnestly, to work hiddenly, to work prayerfully, to work with Jesus; and it is this we must note most carefully, for it is the absence of this union with Him which hinders the work of so many seculars from being efficacious; they will work as though all the success could be obtained by themselves; they do not work with Jesus as their companion; indeed they make vain-glory too often their companion. I do not say this is the case with all, but it is with some ladies in the world; and neither do I say that every nun is entirely free from these faults; my words were every *true* nun. But whether the souls working for God in missionary work are in the convent or live in the world, they can do but little good unless they are spouses of Jesus; and it is possible to be a nun, and not to be a spouse of Jesus; and likewise, thank

God, it is possible not to be a nun, and yet to be a spouse of our dear Lord.

Then in our Little Company there is the work of instructing and catechizing, as well as that which we must always look upon as our chief work, which I do not mention again, having elsewhere enlarged upon it, viz., the assistance of the dying. We should not be like Mary if we were confined to one special devotion. We may have a leaning to one more than to another; we may feel attracted to one with a special love, and it may be God's Holy Spirit that thus attracts us; but nevertheless we must love all. Each child of Mary may not be drawn to imitate her heavenly Mother in all her states of life; some may feel drawn to one, some to another, and thus the whole of Mary's life will be represented. Thus briefly we may form some idea of the life to be led in our Lady's house. It is the life of Jesus and Mary we wish to renew on earth. They were not religious in the sense in which the world generally understands the term, or in the secondary sense of the word;

neither will Mary's own be religious as the world commonly understands the term. But again we say, the object of our institute is not to represent in the Church a very perfect *form of monastic or conventual life*, but to represent as perfectly as may be, consistently with our frail nature, the *life led on earth by Jesus and Mary*.

CONFERENCE XI.

The Little Company of Mary is founded expressly to honour the Mother of God. Those who become members of this Little Company give themselves entirely to Mary's keeping; they make an offering to her once for all of their souls and bodies, goods spiritual and temporal; they deliver themselves entirely to her guidance. They do this to be more like Jesus, who gave Himself entirely to her, and has likewise by making her Queen of heaven and earth given His treasures into her keeping. The members give themselves to Mary

for time and eternity; they may be called her very own, thus imitating the Son of God, who for time and eternity will be Son of Mary, and who we may with all reverence call Mary's very own. By this voluntary bondage Mary's own desire to imitate this subjection of Jesus to His ever Blessed Mother during the many years of His hidden life, and afterwards. Even in heaven He is subject to her in a certain sense, for He will refuse her nothing, and her prayers, as saints tell us, have with Him the efficacy of commands. The Little Company of Mary are bound by their rules to a special devotion, imitating the Maternal Heart of Mary; and following its instincts they devote themselves to the good of souls, more especially those souls about to depart from the body, knowing that Mary, with more reason than other mothers, is most concerned for her dying children.

They are likewise bound to honour in an especial manner the mystery of Calvary, to honour it in union with Mary, watching before the Blessed Sacrament

in union with Mary on Calvary, watching the dying in person in the same spirit. Mary's own will take the place of their Mother at the death-bed of her children; their prayers and penances all tend to obtaining for the eighty thousand who daily die the grace of a happy death, to beg for dying sinners a grace such as Jesus accorded the thief dying on Calvary. Those nursing the sick have the same intention of honouring this loving mystery of Calvary, as though they were before the Blessed Sacrament meditating upon it. The sufferings of the sick person they are nursing remind them of the agony endured by Jesus on Calvary, and the grief of Mary in witnessing it; and in their attentions to the sick person they have the intention of doing what they would wish to have done for their Lord in His sufferings.

The sisters of this institute nurse indifferently poor and rich, Catholics and Protestants.

The peculiar appropriateness of this Order to the present times may be

briefly mentioned. It has been said that the Church, the Spouse of our Lord, seems to have followed her Lord through the various stages of His life, from His hidden life to the time of His Passion, and at the present time she seems to be mystically reproducing in herself the crucifixion of her Divine Head and Master. This replication of our Lord's life is clearly visible in the religious orders. We see the Fathers of the Desert and other contemplatives appearing in the early ages of the Church exemplifying the hidden life of Jesus; later on the Friars Preachers, Jesuits, and others, who imitate their Master in going about everywhere preaching and working miracles of grace in souls; afterwards came various Orders devoted to the Blessed Sacrament; and lastly a strictly contemplative Order devoted to the mystery of Gethsemani, the agony of our Lord in the garden. Calvary followed Gethsemani; and it is to this adorable mystery the Little Company of Mary are devoted.

At the time of our Lord's Passion His

followers were terribly tempted, indeed the devil seems to have been allowed a power he has never been permitted since. In these present days does not he seem likewise to be triumphing over the world and molesting God's people with fearful power? So that, as at the time of the Passion even our Lord's own deserted Him, so now the members of the Church are unusually tempted and many fall. God, who permits these temptations, provides, by the increase of devotion to the dying now rising in the Church, that souls should be saved even at the last. It is in accordance with the justice, wisdom, and mercy of God, that if souls are unusually tried an unusual grace should be granted them, and that this good, as all good is, should be given specially through Mary, and that her own should be inspired to devote themselves to a work so in harmony with the position in which Jesus dying placed Mary with regard to the Church, viz., as its Mother. On Calvary Mary came forward more prominently than at any other time of her life; so now at this

time, now when the Church is as it were on Calvary, is she doing so. May many of her children receive the holy vocation to imitate their Mother, and stand with her on Calvary, pleading in union with her by the Blood her Heart had furnished, the Precious Blood of Jesus shed with so great love to give life to the souls of men.

CONFERENCE XII.

CONFRATERNITY IN HONOUR OF CALVARY,
AND TO ASSIST THE DYING;

FOR OUR LADY'S CHILDREN IN THE WORLD WHO
ARE JOINED IN SPIRIT TO THE LITTLE
COMPANY OF MARY.

"I see souls dropping into hell like leaves from the trees in autumn." — *Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice.*

The members of this Confraternity have for their special object the honouring the suffering Mother-Heart of Mary, and the winning from God some special mercy, some extra gift of His Holy Spirit, to obtain a good death for all who

are in their agony, especially those in greatest need. By praying in union with Mary, offering the Precious Blood shed by Jesus for the souls of all, they hope to obtain for many a death such as that obtained for the thief for whom Mary prayed on Calvary.

The members will honour Mary, not alone by prayer, but also, when able to do so, by personally visiting the dying and assisting them; they will accompany the trembling soul to the brink of eternity; they will assist it by every means in their power; and when the soul has departed they will reverently tend the body, in union with Mary on Calvary disposing the body of Jesus for interment in the sepulchre.

In union with Mary they will compassionate Jesus on the cross, and by reminding the Eternal Father of the sufferings of His beloved Son, of His agony, His death of love, beseech Him to show mercy to all those who are in their agony, who are near their death. They will beg the Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus who died for them, to

breathe upon those unfortunate creatures who may be dying in sin. They will beg Jesus, by the love He bears the Heart of His Mother, to hear its prayer, which they are offering again on earth. They will remind Him of the grief endured by His Mother, and her love for those whom upon His cross He committed to her care.

REASONS FOR ENTERING THIS CONFRA- TERNITY.

To compassionate Jesus dying, and Mary's martyrdom on Calvary, knowing that there is no mystery we can honour more profitable to our soul, or more pleasing to God, than that of Calvary.

Likewise, because by obtaining for others a holy death we are doing the greatest act of charity we can do; in nothing do we more please and resemble Jesus than in endeavouring to save souls.

And because of the grand work we do, if in our lives we save but one soul from eternal misery, and obtain for it

everlasting happiness, and because, trusting to God's mercy, we may hope to save many, according to the earnestness of our prayers and endeavours.

It being usual in worldly associations to contribute and to give regular donations, so in our Confraternity every member will be expected to contribute something to a general fund. It will be something, however, from their spiritual riches, not from their worldly goods. It will be a weekly Rosary or Mass, a monthly communion, the devotion of the Way of the Cross, &c. Each one will, according to his or her devotion, promise something, and likewise will endeavour, when the Confraternity is established in their immediate neighbourhood, to be present at the Masses offered by the director for the dying, and likewise to attend the public devotions he arranges for the same purpose.

It is estimated that those who contribute a pound to a life-boat association may count that they have saved a life. Those who enter this Confraternity may likewise consider that according to their

contributions they may save one or more lives; they may save many souls from being eternally lost: they may also consider that they have taken a grand step towards ensuring their own salvation, since "he who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall *save his soul from death*, and cover a multitude of sins."—*St. James.*

THE SPECIAL PRACTICES OF DEVOTION
RECOMMENDED ARE:—

First, the uniting together in spirit during Mass, praying in union with Mary on Calvary, petitioning for a happy death for those in their agony, offering the death of Jesus then commemorated in the Mass.

Secondly, the obtaining Masses from priests for the dying.

Thirdly, the devoting the three hours between twelve and three in a special manner to God, by performing the duties of the time most perfectly, and repeating one after another the last words of Jesus on the cross, commencing with the first, "Father, forgive," and

at three o'clock, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

This can be done in the midst of the most distracting employments, and well pleased will the Eternal Father be that the last words that emanated from the loving Heart of Jesus are thus commemorated and honoured in His Church.

These are the private spiritual works of the association. The exterior works will be the visiting of the dying, and assisting them as every loving child of Jesus would wish to have assisted Him in His agonizing death.

CONFERENCE XIII.

Some people, after they have read what has been written about this divine devotion, (divine, since it is the devotion practised by the Son of God,) say they know not what to do, they are still in a cloud as to how it is to be practised, they would willingly adopt what so many saints and holy people recommend as so glorious to God, so bene-

ficial to their neighbours, of such incalculable service to themselves; but what are they to do? They have made the offering, and yet perceive not any perceptible difference in themselves; they feel not within them the grand effects described in the *True Devotion* of the Venerable Louis Grignon de Montfort, *The Path of Mary*, and other works upon the devotion; but they need patience. The seed is sown when a soul has once given itself to Mary by the solemn act of consecration; it will gradually sprout and bring forth leaves, blossoms, and finally fruit, fruit which God Himself will delight in. What the soul has principally to do is to leave room for this seed to grow, not to plant over it, but to leave it plenty of room, to water it, to tend the little sprout when it appears, to use every natural means, and so gradually to cause to fructify the seed sown within it. As with the virtues, when trying to acquire them we have to perform acts in order to acquire the habit of virtue, so with this devotion. Let people first resolve, but

not generally and vaguely, to perform all they do in union with Jesus and Mary; they may, of course, make that intention, but they must likewise enter into particulars with themselves; they may resolve to make so many distinct acts before their mid-day examination, and again so many before the nightly examen.

If altogether when we surround the altar for office we renounce ourselves and turn to Mary, and then with no thought of ourselves, except only the simple natural detestation of ourselves which will come without effort, it being the truthful state in which Mary places her children, by bringing the Holy Ghost to shed His bright rays and reveal to them themselves; if we thus altogether breathe, so to speak, Mary before Jesus, what pleasure we shall give to Him, what delight His Sacred Heart will experience as His children come before Him, humble, simple, dead to themselves, but with Mary living, dwelling in them.

We may and shall probably forget these little acts, they may be trouble-

some to make, it will be an effort to make them. Never mind when we find we have forgotten them; let us commence again, and in course of time we shall more easily remember. They may indeed be changed into a habit. We may find it troublesome:—never mind; we must remember nothing ever really good is done without trouble. Let us but persevere in this constant habit of making little acts; we may have to continue them one year, two, three, or more, before that time comes when the soul really lives more in Jesus and Mary than in itself; when the soul uses, (if I may so speak,) the Heart of Jesus more than its own; when Mary has so possession of that soul that her loves are its loves, her wishes its wishes; when Mary, having complete power over that soul, can make use of it to act, speak, write as she wishes. It has been observed, in a work upon this devotion, that as the evil spirits can take possession of persons and influence them, and speak by them, so in a contrary way can the sweet spirit of Mary, (which is

indeed the spirit of God,) live in us, act in us, work by us. Mother, come, dwell, take root within us. We should not be over anxious to see how we are progressing. Let us go steadily forward, making our little daily acts, increasing them when we find we keep faithfully the resolution we may make to perform so many in a day. Our angel guardian will help us if we ask him; he will remind us, and bye-and-bye we shall not need reminding, for our union will have become so strong, so real, that our thoughts and desires will be the thoughts and desires of Mary.

We are commencing a work in time that is to influence eternity. We are indeed sowing the grain of mustard seed that will spring up and become a great tree. We, little, worthless, sinful that we are, are called to lay the foundation of a great work. Thank God, He shows us ourselves so well, and makes us know ourselves in some slight degree as He knows us, so that we do not pride ourselves upon this in the least, indeed we must consider it simply as a great

responsibility resting upon us. Let us never forget this. God will give us great graces, graces given us for the sake of others as much as for ourselves. Now, without desiring you to have any selfish feeling about your order, a self-satisfied feeling which may arise in a religious house, and which has nothing holy about it, and which may be known by those who have it in their scarcely concealed, I do not like to say contempt, but it is something akin to it, of other orders; without desiring to instil this feeling in the least into you, since it is a feeling to be contemned,—(it is a bit of human nature, and human nature is like dirt and dust, it finds its way everywhere,)—I wish you, dear sisters, to have a reverence and respect for your order, to see it in the light of what we trust God intends it to be, rather than as you can at present see it in its first little beginnings. It is necessary that you should fully understand this work, which is not indeed the work of man, but, as we humbly believe, of God. You indeed are now few in num-

ber ; you may each of you be sent to head a fresh branch ; you may each have souls dependent upon you ; you will each be mothers. It will make you more like Mary Virgin and Mother ; it is a title you should love.

In bringing before you the different features of our institute it is difficult to know which to notice first. We have already drawn attention to the fact that the religious orders replicating, reproducing in themselves the life of our Lord, the opportuneness of the present order is evident. "Never," says a great man of the present day, "were there times like the present, never was the Church in the state it is at present, so beset by its outward foes, so troubled by those who should have been foremost to defend, deserted by its members who were the objects of God's choicest graces." We, with those who will hereafter be affiliated to us, the Confraternity likewise devoted to Calvary, devoted to Jesus dying on the cross, devoted to Mary broken-hearted at its feet, we will specially honour and devote

ourselves to this mystery. We devote ourselves then to the same objects that Jesus died for. It was specially to draw down the mercy of His Father that Jesus died. It is the mercy of God we are specially bound to glorify and honour. It was for the sinners that He came, as He Himself tells us. It is to sinners we are specially devoted. It was on Calvary Jesus pointed out His Mother as our Mother, and gave us Mary Immaculate in the place of fallen Eve, and made her there Mother of His Church. It is to the Motherhood, the Maternal Heart of Mary, we are specially devoted. It was on Calvary Jesus poured forth, offered His Precious Blood for our salvation; and we too are bound to offer, to adore, and make reparation to, the precious price of our redemption.

We above all should not doubt the mercy of God. We are bound by our rules to specially honour it. We will honour it in ourselves, because the more mercies and graces we, by our correspondence with those we have already received, induce God to bestow upon us,

the more glory do we give to His divine attribute of mercy ; and the more poor unfortunate beings dying in sin we bring before the notice of God, (if I may so speak,) and upon whom by our prayers and tears we induce Him to show mercy, the more do we honour this adorable attribute. Ah, dear sisters, in times of sickness the thought may come to us, " If God were to call me now to Himself, how should I be fit to go to heaven? what have I ever done to deserve it? Nothing, absolutely nothing." But shall I then grow disconsolate at this thought? No, indeed no; but I will look up to the great God, and say, " I shall enter heaven through Your mercy alone. I will eternally glorify it. It is a happiness to think that through Your mercy alone can I obtain heaven, O God of mercy, infinite abyss of goodness, of love."

Thus the one thought we should ever draw from the consideration of our vileness is that God's mercy and condescension shine more in stooping to us because of our very unworthiness. This

must encourage us. Let us but keep in our true place in creation. Let us really know ourselves, and let this knowledge show itself, not in word, but in deed and in truth, and by this I mean that we are not to say we are great sinners, and then at the first rebuke we receive inwardly rebel either by dislike of, or uncharitable feeling towards, the person who gave it, or by considering ourselves unjustly treated, by considering ourselves martyrs in fact. No, this is not humility, this is not truthfulness. We deserve whatever rebuke any one may give us, though perhaps not for this particular matter for which we are reproved, but doubtless we deserve reproof, and perhaps for something much worse. Let us ever have the lowly feeling that is becoming to us, and God will pour upon us grace upon grace. He will heap His favours upon us. We shall be happy on earth with the constant feeling of His mercy, His love to us: we shall be trophies of that mercy for all eternity.

This then must be a constant subject of our meditation, the mercy of God.

We must so think and meditate upon this attribute of God that we may grow bold in asking favours; we must ask confidently, not wavering, because God loves to give. He will in His infinite mercy give even to those who may presume somewhat on account of the favours already received, but He will give unboundedly to those who are entirely free from all presumption, and who attribute nothing whatever to themselves when they receive gifts from Him, who know it is not on account of anything in themselves (except that trust in Him with which He has inspired them) that He is thus so merciful, so generous to them. Let us for a short time take as wide a view of God as we can,—God in Himself, God in creation. Let us consider well this fundamental truth, “that all things are created for, and must tend to the glory of God,” and not that—according to the view some take of it—the devil has robbed God of part of His glory. This is not really the case. The devil is hard at work striving to do so, but out

of evil comes good. God in His infinite wisdom defeats his plots and snares.

God cannot be greater, more beautiful, more loveable, than He is; but the snares and the evil which the devil causes almost seem to make Him so to us. Think of God's patience, think of His compassion, think of His mercy. We have come round again to the point we are at present considering, the mercy of God, and how we can best glorify it. How can we take our Master's side against His enemy? By making His glory shine all the more by bringing the very ones the devil has drawn into darkness back again to God, back again into the bright light of His mercy. Thus do we almost seem to make God greater, as I have before said, in the same way as the sun appears greater the more its light is spread over the dark objects. The Church itself is a great work of God's mercy. It especially glorifies that divine attribute. The angelic creation glorifies God in many ways, but it does not glorify His mercy as does His

creation of human nature. God, even God, does not seem to be able to show greater mercy than in the formation of His Church, "His new creation, placed within the old fallen one, far outstripping it, far more glorious, far more beautifully reflecting the divine attributes than unfallen creation did when in its pristine splendour God looked upon it, and seeing His own beauty reflected in it, saw that it was good, and blessed it. In the first creation were placed a man and woman, before their fall immaculate, Adam and Eve. In the regeneration, in the new creation, behold Jesus and Mary. How wonderful are the ways of God, how beautiful. Oh, ye clever men of the day, who study all things except your good Creator, how mistaken you are, how foolish. "Happy are they who follow the steps of the Holy One, who study His ways." We are bound to a special devotion, (if I may use the expression, apparently inappropriate,) to the Church. We are, by the grace and special calling of God, going to

increase its glory. We are going to add fresh lustre to it, to add new members to it, at the time when many of its old ones seem falling away, when many of its branches have withered, and of necessity been cut off. We are specially bound to represent the Church, to stand up for it in its day of trouble, the time of its passion, the sad time which has now commenced, the worst of which indeed is yet to come. We are banded, bound, vowed together for one special object; we know no distinction of nationality; we have left home and friends; we have put away even our individual selves, I mean all personal feelings and interests; we are resolved to fight for God and His interests in the day when the princes of this earth stand up to fight against Him, to oppress, to crush, to kill, if possible, His Church; but it cannot be put to death, it will never die, it is divine; it may be, as indeed it is, sorely troubled, sorely grieved, wounded, suffering, afflicted; but it grows to our eyes more divine, more beautiful, as it becomes more like

its Head, Jesus the Incarnate One, as He, sorrowful, suffering, in extreme pain and anguish, gave it its life, as He laid down His own for it. Holy Church, mother Church, how we love her and her head, the holy father, our Lord's own representative. We will prevent her children being lost to her, we will place ourselves at her portals, the death-beds of her members; we will allow none to go forth for whom we have not prayed, for we will pray for all, we will plead before the throne of God. Lord God of mercy, Thy enemy has ensnared the souls for whom Jesus shed His Blood; look upon that Blood, we show it to Thee, we offer it to Thee; be appeased. The Blood of Jesus cries to Thee from the cross, the Heart of Mary offers it to Thee. O God, forgive; O God, show mercy.

O Precious Blood of Jesus, coursing through His sacred veins, life and love incarnate, giving life and love to all His followers, poured from His Sacred Heart upon us. Are we not all fed and nourished by this sacred stream of life,

containing all sweetness, all that can satisfy us? O most Precious Blood, how can we adore, how can we love it sufficiently, and how can we love one another enough, redeemed as we are by that Precious Blood? Your sister is fed by the Blood of Jesus; He imparts His life to her as He does to yourself. See the great union this implies. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." We are nourished by our dear Lord Himself. The Good Shepherd with more than mother-love feeds us Himself, He nourishes us, He gives us life and strength by pouring into us His own life. Jesus, our love, our life, we will cling to Thee, we will draw near to Thee, we will take our strength from Thee. We are happy to know we cannot do without Thee; we would not be without this happy necessity of keeping close to Thee. Oh no, dear Lord; let us be with Thee, in the company of Mary, though we know it leads to the cross, though it costs us a broken heart, still let us live in Thee, O Jesus, Pearl of great price, precious

Pearl of the Ever-blessed Trinity. Jesus, my love, my Lord and God, for whom I am; Jesus, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh; Jesus, how can we but long for Thee? O Jesus, I will be obedient unto death; but I will say to my Lord what is in my heart: "I love Thee with my whole heart and soul, and above all things; I love thee, Mother of Jesus, my Mother, more than myself; I love you, all ye beautiful holy angels and saints. O God, Most Holy Trinity, I rejoice that Thou art happy. It is more to me than my own happiness. My God, I thank Thee that Thou art what Thou art. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory. O God, how wonderful, how beautiful Thou art. I love Thee in all places; I love Thee in Thy saints, Thy holy ones on earth, as well as those in heaven. Let us begin, O God, to do Thy will on earth as the blessed do in heaven. How can we begin to do on earth what the blessed do in heaven? Is it not, dear God, by loving Thee above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves?"

If we did but do this, how should we not please God? But who are those who love their neighbour as themselves? We may have a great love for souls, we may pray and do penance for them, meanwhile in our own family, amongst our own immediate relations or friends, we have not the charity our dear Lord wishes us to have; we do not love them as ourselves; their character is not as dear to us as our own; and we who would not perhaps knowingly soil our consciences by a sin of detraction, do so almost unknowingly by our carelessness regarding the character of our neighbour. If we love our neighbours as we love ourselves we are always finding opportunities of speaking well of them; we allow no one to speak ill of them; we even find excuse for what is hardly excusable. How very, very far we are from this charity; how poor is our love of our neighbour; how little is it like the love of Jesus. How little do we consider, what is nevertheless a fact, that He takes as done to Himself what we do to others, the evil as well as the

good. How it pains us that people do not know and love Jesus. But does it pain us when people do not love our sisters, our neighbours, or do not think well of them? Are we perhaps even secretly pleased that our sister has fallen in the estimation of others? Do we ever purposely keep anything back that might make our sister thought well of? Ah, we need to carefully examine our consciences upon these points. There is a silence that is sin; there is at times a something in our souls that displeases Jesus, that disturbs the repose He wishes to take within them, that ruffles His place of rest, that destroys the sweetness He would suck from them. And why is this? It is want of charity that displeases our dear Lord. Does it make us happier to love ourselves better than our neighbour? No, indeed no. There would be ever a joy, a little, and though I say a little, it is indeed very much, akin to the joy of Him with us, if we truly loved our neighbour in word, in deed, and in truth; because, if we possess a spirit of

love for one another, we possess the Holy Spirit of God Himself, with His glorious gifts of joy, peace, and patience. Holy Spirit, come.

*"Veni, Sancte Spiritus,
Et emitte cœlitus,
Lucis tuæ radium."*

*"Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid ;
Come, fill the hearts that Thou hast made."*

Yes ; love and peace go together. Our Lord promised them together. Ah, let us keep His commandment, and His peace will be ever with us. But it is with this virtue as with others. To make a general intention is of little avail ; we must enter into particulars, we must examine ourselves where we think we fail, and resolve how we will amend. Ah, how many there are who examine themselves, not by the standard of real perfection in God's sight, but by their own mistaken standard of perfection. There are all kinds of points upon which people make their particular examen, upon silence, recollection, modesty of de-

meanour, human respect, love of praise, and numberless others, all well to be remembered in their way, but want of charity to our neighbour comes before all, and true charity may root out all. Let us *all*, then, begin to make our examen upon this one point, let us all pray about it. If we are all united upon this one point most certainly we shall succeed; and as we are told we are laying the foundations of a great work for God, if we ourselves indeed are those foundations, let the foundations be laid in love, let them be strongly cemented together by love, let them be bound together by holy love so strongly that nothing may destroy this union, nothing disturb or displace one of these stones laid by our Lady as the first of the new building she desires to raise in holy Church to the honour of her Son and to the glory of His heavenly Father.

Let us, then, adhere strongly to one another; if we have anything in the past to regret, let it be now atoned for; if any one has anything to forgive, let it be now entirely forgiven and forgotten.

One member of a body cannot be hurt without the other members, the whole body, feeling it. Thus must it be with us. We must live in unity or we shall fall. Let us be united, and in vain will the devil lay his snares for us. His first efforts will be to disunite us; before he tries other temptations he will try that, because if he succeed in that his great point is gained; "a house divided against itself cannot stand." But by the grace of God he shall not succeed; if he has crept in in ever so slight a degree he shall be rooted out; he shall be turned backward, blushing for shame. She who it was foretold should crush his head will give strength to her little ones to resist his plots: he will be put to flight by her own; they will pursue him from his hold if he has found the least resting-place in Mary's home, the sanctuary of her Heart, where her little ones are gathered together to renew again on earth her glorious, loving, simple life. Teach us, holy Mary, show thyself to us; thou lovest to hide thyself in thy

sweet humility, but reveal thyself to us as we would know thee, that we may imitate thee. Thus are we insensibly led to look upon one great feature of our institute, the imitation of Mary, the taking her Heart for our own, and living more by it than by our own. This is what God desires, this is what a holy servant of God has said He is pressing for, a great, immense, increased devotion to His holy Mother. This is what the saints foretold should be; this is what we will endeavour shall be; and let us take heart when it may seem to us that we are not corresponding with the end of our vocation, that we are doing very little towards it. Let us not turn our attention to each other to criticize, much less to the community as a whole, but let each look to herself and endeavour to do her own part well, doing what she can of course to help others too; and insensibly, as quietly as the seed that is sown grows up, buds, and blossoms, so will our work progress, quietly, insensibly, but surely. Praise be to the good God who gives the

waters of divine grace that the seed may fructify ; blessings be to the hand, the sweet hand of Mary, that pours those waters upon us.

CONFERENCE XIV.

DEVOTION TO THE DYING.

The Little Company of Mary is formed expressly to honour the mystery of Calvary, and to honour it as Mary did. What is it we look upon in a simple meditation on the fifth sorrowful mystery of the Rosary? We see the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son of Man, hanging on a cross dying. We see His life, Love incarnate, His Precious Blood dropping as very drops of love upon this earth, shed for the fallen race of men, and yet unheeded by them, nay more, despised and sacrilegiously contemned. We see beneath the cross a woman, Mary, the Immaculate Conception, Mother of God, one who, though a virgin, bore within her a mother's

heart. Around the cross are holy angels. Men see them not, but Mary their queen sees them, and joins the adoration they are offering to the precious Object they and she so love, the Blood her own Heart had furnished to the Word Incarnate, then hanging on the cross, dying for the love of creatures His goodness made. Near to Jesus we see a sinner, one who has spent his life in outraging the commands of his Creator, and who is now dying at enmity with Him. We see beneath the cross the disciple whom Jesus loved. We see the Magdalen. From this, then, will be drawn out the features of our institute.

First, we are joined together to make one united body, animated by the spirit of Mary. If we would discover that spirit we must go to her Heart, and see what emanated from it. With Mary the foremost thought in all the features of her life was to give glory to God. God, who is orderly in all His works, has made us all to give Him some particular glory, to do a certain work, to honour

some particular attribute. Mary knew how she was to give glory to God; she knew what particular attribute she was to honour above others, and she devoted herself from the commencement of her life to the divine attribute of mercy. Those, then, who are united to renew Mary's life on earth will devote themselves to honouring this adorable attribute of God, which we inhabitants of a fallen world must surely love with a peculiar love, God's mercy. This, then, is our *first rule*.

Secondly, we are to devote ourselves to honouring the mercy of God in union with the Mother of mercy. How then did Mary do this on Calvary? By joining with Jesus in the offering He was making of His Precious Blood. This, then, is our *second rule*. To have a special devotion to the Precious Blood, remembering that it is the Blood of Jesus that draws God's mercy upon the world.

It must be ever remembered that reparation, most solemn reparation, is due to the Blood that was so fearfully

outraged during the Passion of our Lord, that has been so outraged ever since, and never more so than in our own times.

The members of this institute will then make most earnest loving reparation, in union with the Heart of Mary, to what was dearer to her than her own life.

Thirdly, Mary stood beneath the cross with the disciple whom Jesus loved, and it was there she was made our Mother, it was there we were commended to her care. The beloved disciple stood in the place of all those who, though not present on Calvary in person, were present in the mind and heart of Jesus, who saw and loved on the cross every individual soul of man, and committed to Mary as her own His chosen ones, that they might be in His place to her. This, then, is our *third rule*, to take to us Mary as our very own, to consider that from the cross Jesus addressed to us the words, "Behold thy Mother." We will therefore love, cherish, and take as our own the Maternal Heart of

Mary. We will honour and love it as our Lord did, and have the greatest confidence that to appeal to Him by the love He bears the Heart of His Mother will be an appeal that He will never refuse. We will honour the Heart of Mary in its title of Immaculate; we will honour it with its title of Virgin; we will honour it with its crowning title of Mother.

Fourthly, we see performed on Calvary a wondrous work of mercy, the conversion of a *dying sinner*. From this we take our *fourth* rule, that we have devoted ourselves to the assistance of the dying; and though we have devoted all we are and all we have to Mary, to dispose of us as she pleases, yet our *special work* is towards the dying, and for this end is our institute formed, being fully assured that there is no work so pleasing to her, no work so acceptable to her Maternal Heart, as to assist her dying children. We shall watch and pray before the Blessed Sacrament in union with Mary on Calvary; we shall watch and pray at the

death-bed in union with Mary, and be present at the death of Jesus again in His dying members. We will watch and pray by the dying sinner as Mary did by the dying thief on Calvary; and by obtaining forgiveness at the last hour for those who, trembling on the brink of eternity, may be lost for ever unless some great grace is brought to bear upon them, we shall hinder the devil from obtaining a soul for whom Jesus died; we shall save a soul, made most beautiful, made to the likeness of the Blessed Trinity, made for heaven, from being changed into something most hateful and most horrible, condemned to be separated for ever from the good God who made it and loved it, and doomed to abide in an eternity of woe with the devil, who destroyed it and hates it. This, then, is our fourth rule, to have a burning zeal for the salvation of dying sinners.

This last rule may easily be seen to be the compendium of the others. To explain: God is merciful for sinners, for if there were no sinners He could not

be said to be merciful, that is, He could not exercise His mercy.

Our Lord came to save sinners. Why did that loving Sacred Heart of Jesus open its treasure of Precious Blood upon the cross, and then, exhausted of its life, cease in death those beatings whose every throb had been with love for men? Why must Jesus, the immortal, die? He died to earn a happy death for every single human being of the fallen race who dwell upon this earth. Christ died for *all*, and yet of the eighty thousand who daily die, how many die, not the death of the just, but the death of the damned?

Why did Mary suffer on Calvary? Suffering is for sin. Our Lord had taken our sins upon Himself, therefore *He* suffered. Mary had not, and could not do this, since she could not satisfy by her suffering for one single venial offence against God; but she was a Mother, and the law, by which it was laid down "that a mother should bring forth her children in pain and anguish," though it applied not to Mary as Mother

of Jesus, did apply to her as Mother of men, and therefore did Mary suffer and travail on Calvary in pain and anguish to obtain for her children the grace of a happy death, which the Church styles the hour of their birth. Again, we cannot fulfil our first rule better than by being zealous in the fourth. Our first rule is to seek the glory of God by honouring His divine attribute of mercy. How can we give greater glory to God than by saving souls at their last hour? We know their salvation is ensured, which in the conversion of other sinners we do not know. The angels, we know, seek purely and solely at all times the glory of God, and they "rejoice more over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just who need not penance." How then do they rejoice when they see a sinner performing in a proper spirit the one great penance God instituted for sin,—death? We know how specially our Lord loves us to practise devotion to the holy souls, how greatly it gives glory to the Ever-blessed Trinity when a soul, the hard-earned fruit of the

Passion of Jesus, leaves its place of suffering in purgatory to enter heaven, and though we so love this devotion, yet it cannot be said to give the glory to God in releasing a soul from purgatory that it does *to save a soul from hell*, and this we do by devotion to the dying. They may be hardened sinners whom the devil is waiting but a few moments to claim as his, but a prayer, conceived in heaven, has been offered on earth for the sinners who are that day to die, and the Holy Spirit has been touched, and breathes upon many in the agony of death, and souls are saved to give glory to God in heaven, who, if that prayer had not been offered, would have been lost for ever, and have passed from this world of mercy to enter a region where God's justice is exercised with inexorable severity. The souls thus saved at the last will reflect God's mercy for all eternity. Think, then, how greatly we can give glory to God by this devotion, and resolve to strive earnestly to observe these rules, and thus spread the light of God's mercy over a dark and

sinful world. To make a poor comparison, it would be like causing the light of the sun to beautify a dark earth. God's essential glory we know cannot be increased, but His accidental glory can, and thus every sinner converted by our efforts will reflect God's mercy in a wonderful way, just as dark objects receive and reflect the light of the sun, though they make not the sun's light itself greater. Hence, I repeat, our first rule is strikingly comprised in the fourth. Again, our second rule, a special devotion to the Precious Blood, is best ensured by our devotion to the dying, since, if they are saved from dying in a state of sin we prevent the Precious Blood having been shed for them in vain. We likewise make reparation to the Precious Blood for the dishonour shown it in the souls of men. When the Precious Blood lay on the ground during the time of our Lord's Passion, and was trodden under foot by sinful men, it was shown visibly to our sight how the Precious Blood would be treated in after years by those for whom

it was shed. It would fall upon the souls of men but to be spurned and outraged by them. Thus if we cause it to be honoured by those dying sinners whose souls have received it but to dishonour it, we shall obtain the end of our second rule.

Our third rule is to show especial honour to the Maternal Heart of Mary, knowing that that Immaculate Virgin Mother-Heart is the most beautiful of all God's created works, (the sacred Humanity of our Lord of course excepted,) and therefore, what God so honours it must be to His glory and our interest to honour likewise. The Heart of Mary is the source of the Precious Blood, therefore those who wish to show special devotion to the Precious Blood must love the Heart that furnished it; and hence our second rule leads to the third by natural consequence. How then does our rule make us honour Mary? As God Himself does. After the possession of Himself there is nothing that even our Lord can give that more rejoices the Heart of His

Mother than to give it children, the souls for whom He shed His Blood; therefore, after having given our whole selves to Mary, there is nothing we can do that will give greater joy to that sweet Mother-Heart of Mary than to obtain a happy death for those for whom it suffered in union with Jesus on Calvary.

Need it be said or made a special rule that the members of our Little Company will honour with deepest adoration and constant devotion the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit? It is the Holy Ghost whose whisper to the sinner changes the soiled sinful soul into the bright, beautiful soul so beloved by the Three Persons of the Ever-blessed Trinity that They immediately come and dwell therein. As Jesus on Calvary opened His Sacred Heart, and poured forth its treasure of Precious Blood, He did it with a special intent of drawing upon us, the sinful, unworthy children of earth, the great gift of His Holy Spirit. Let us humbly remind the Eternal Father of this wish of the Heart

of Jesus ; let us, in union with Mary, show our Father in heaven this desire of our Lord in His death-agony, that the Holy Spirit might speak and live in the hearts of those whose nature He had assumed, and had made Himself their Brother. We who devote ourselves to live with Jesus and Mary on Calvary, must enter into their Sacred Hearts, that our own may be filled with their wishes and intentions. The Heart of Jesus was filled with love for the whole human race, and therefore did it suffer and empty itself of its Precious Blood to obtain for us what alone could fit us for heaven, for eternal life with Himself, the gift of God's Spirit. We must not forget this office of the Holy Ghost. We must remember that it is by means of the Holy Spirit we are reconciled to God. We must live and pray by the Holy Spirit as Mary did, and ever bear in mind that it was on Calvary Jesus earned for us this grand outpouring of His love and mercy, His Holy Spirit.

As the members watch and pray by

the death-bed of the sinner, as they in union with the Maternal Heart of Mary offer the Precious Blood Jesus shed upon the cross, crying for mercy for the poor unhappy soul that has so short a portion remaining of that time in which God has decreed to show mercy, let them remember that to the Holy Spirit belongs the office of converting the obdurate heart; therefore to the Holy Spirit must they appeal, and specially honour Him by daily acts of devotion and increasing love, which love will be acquired by increasing daily knowledge of the gifts, graces, and office of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Mary, spouse of the Holy Ghost, will obtain for her own this fervent love of the Holy Spirit; and this grace will not alone sanctify themselves, but render them, like the apostles, able to work prodigies in the souls of others. As it was by the Precious Blood shed by our dear Lord the Holy Ghost was given, as it was from the Heart of Mary the Precious Blood was taken, so through the Heart of Mary, through the offering

of the Most Precious Blood, we shall draw down the Holy Ghost upon ourselves and others. It is thus the Holy Spirit loves to be invoked, it is thus He Himself works, by means of Mary and the Precious Blood.

Go forth, then, little ones whom Mary has chosen to be her apostles. The whole world is your domain. Go forth into all nations. The God of Mary will be with you. Fear not, He who has begun a good work in you will Himself perfect it.

CONFERENCE XV.

It is very evident, dear sisters, that in entering our Lady's home we are called upon to bear suffering, and therefore how necessary it is to know how to bear it well. Now we all surely wish to acquire virtue; we all wish to daily present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God. Why do we wish to be virtuous? Is it not to render ourselves pleasing to our dear Lord? We

want to be loved; we want to render ourselves dear to Jesus. A weak, vacillating will or wish will not make us so. We must stir ourselves up, we must do violence to ourselves. Why did the saints do such great penances? What was the reason of their seeming excess? It was in many instances, and particularly at the commencement of their spiritual life, because they were afraid of themselves. They knew well that "their natural inclinations were prone to evil from their very childhood, and if not curbed and corrected by self-denial, would infallibly carry them to hell." I do not say but that afterwards their longing to resemble Jesus made them desire to suffer in order to be like Him; but at the commencement it was the knowledge they had that the more they mortified themselves the more closely would they be united to God; that the more they were detached from the world and themselves, the more they would become attached, the closer they would be, to God. This was their thought as

they deprived themselves of every earthly pleasure.

Now, far would it be from me to endeavour to instil into the Little Company of Mary a different spirit from what I believe it is the will of God it should have. I should be sorry to see it fall away from what we all feel should be its distinguishing mark, viz., simplicity. The Trappist, Carthusian, Carmelite, each glorify God in their own particular way. The way of Mary's own is different; but though the penance, silence, seclusion of these various grand orders is not for us, still to attain our end we have need of the means they employed, we need penance, we need silence, we need seclusion, though not always, not at all times, not one person so much as another. We desire to attain a peace, a simplicity, a liberty, similar even to that enjoyed in paradise by Adam and Eve in their state of innocence, as far as our fallen nature will admit. Now this can be to a certain extent, but it is not obtained without struggle, without penance, without

going through a state of purgation, intense in proportion to the peace and perfection which is to follow. Now I do not say that this fiery ordeal is destined for all, but it is intended for some exceptional souls; it may be for many or most of Mary's own. Ordinarily they suffer peacefully, happily; but at some certain time of their lives there will be, if they are to attain a great union with God, a time of fearful desolation and dereliction. Now, if suffering is so great and good that if taken well it brings all virtues in its train, and this may be laid down as a principle, how are we to suffer? How can we learn to suffer well? It is certain as regards this as well as all other virtues, that to obtain it we must practise it. We have to follow, with regard to our perfection, the same plan that we have to follow if we wish to become proficient in any art, we have to practice, and practice will make perfect. In studying an art we are careful, considerate, thoughtful; we practice carefully and constantly. So should it be with regard to our perfec-

tion. We must practise carefully, we must consider well and thoughtfully, and we must perseveringly perform what we think to be, or what we are told is useful for the end in view. Thus must we act if we wish to learn to suffer well. We must little by little practise the art of suffering well, and then indeed we shall suffer less, though we may have heavier crosses than others. It is said by some that they dread suffering because it disturbs their peace; but they are wrong. They should dread themselves, they should fear their own selfishness, because it is that which disturbs their peace, it is that and the opposition they make to their suffering, not the suffering itself, that disturbs their peace. Our Lady had peace on Calvary. She never lost her peace at any moment of her life, not even during the terrible trial of the three days loss, though then she came nearest to it. As was said before, even the saints have had times of intense suffering, when their peace did seem disturbed, but these were exceptional cases, it was not the rule.

Now, to begin with the art of suffering at its first stage. It is certain we must all suffer. The Council of Trent says that the daily life of every Christian should be one of penance. We cannot avoid suffering, therefore how necessary for us to know how to suffer. Some need it to keep them from sinning; some will say they would wish to be meek and gentle, but that they have naturally a disposition that is averse to contradiction; reproof disturbs them: and we may be sure that those who cannot take contradiction from creatures cannot take it from God. They cannot bear pain. In time of illness they would not behave as even any ordinary Christian ought to do. Pain is a contradiction to our nature. It would be almost an unheard-of thing to find one who bore long suffering patiently and submissively, who was not likewise patient with those around, patient under reproof, patient, gentle, and humble, for humility is one of the precious fruits of well-borne suffering. Therefore now the saints would be beforehand in this

matter, and would school themselves to contradiction by voluntary penance, and thus they received in such a Christian spirit the contradictions of God and creatures. There is an axiom that like cures like, and we know the new principle of late years inculcated by certain doctors, that to cure a person of a disease you give them what would cause such a disease if they had it not, and for a similar reason people are vaccinated or inoculated. Let those, then, who know themselves to be deficient in patience and its sister virtues commence little by little to contradict themselves.

Mother of God, Mother of men, Mother most blessed, most happy Mother, Mother most sorrowful, true Mother, sweet Mother. O most happy word, most comforting word, uttered by the Eternal Word, who gave in uttering it a name to the divine idea of Mother. Mary, with the joy none but mothers know ; Mary, with the sorrow none but a mother can feel ; Mother Mary, Mother dear to the Heart of God, would that we could see and love

thee as He does. Let us, close to the Heart and mind of God, see thee, Mary, and find in thee our heart's delight, peace, and rest, and let us be known in God's world as living copies of thyself, living thy sweet, simple, unselfish life; living ever for others, never for ourselves. Beautiful art thou, O Mary; beautiful sweet Mother. The beauty of God dazzles us, we cannot in our present mortal state contemplate that magnificent beauty; but it is reflected in Mary. Yes, as the fair moon reflects the light of the sun, faithfully does she reflect the beauty, inaccessible to mortal eyes, of God. Oh Mary, thou art lovely. See thee where we will, thou art ever most lovable. We draw near to thee in Bethlehem, we come near to thy breast; thou art feeding Jesus our Infant God, and we love thee, Mother above all mothers. We see thee again, happy mother, in thy quiet home with Jesus and Joseph. Mother radiantly beautiful, with the light of heaven in thy loving eyes, happy in loving and being loved, we

love thee, Mary Mother. See thee again, Mary, ascending thy sorrowful way to Calvary, sweet sorrowing Mother, bearing us all, as Jesus was, in thy Heart. Mother, we love thee again, but we love thee best as, heart-broken, in unutterable sorrow we watch thee standing beneath the cross, where, in union with Jesus, thou didst bring us forth. Wonderful unspeakable mystery, with depths of wisdom and love known to God alone: we stay here to contemplate this transcending mystery. Jesus is Mother to us. He gives His life, His Blood, that we may have life, and the sweet Heart of Mary gave Jesus the Blood that redeemed us. Mother, sweetest word after that of Jesus, show thyself a Mother, show thy love still more that we may love thee more.

CONFERENCE XVI.

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY
CROSS.

There will be a time when the cross will appear triumphant. Happy lovers of the cross of Christ, it is good to think upon this. There will come a day, a glad, happy, glorious day, when this earth will see the cross triumphant. Carried by angels will the cross be at the last day, and all who have loved that sacred sign will rejoice. Oh, Jesus, we look upon Thee day by day, bleeding, mangled on the cross; we feel the bitter shame, the pain, the ignominy, of Thy death upon it; Thy wan white face, the loving, grief-stricken eyes are before us, the sad, beautiful eyes revealing both the love and anguish of Thy breaking Heart. We love Thee so on Thy cross that we remain and watch, and desire never to leave Thee. We will bind ourselves to Thy cross; we love Thee

best where Thou hast best loved us. Thy own deserted Thee at that hour, and we grieve as we think of it, and resolve the more to make reparation, to tell Thee how sorry we are for the pain Thou didst feel at the desertion of those who should have bravely stood by Thee. We, too, at some time of our lives have left Thee, we have denied by our conduct that we know Thee; but henceforth this shall not be; by Thy cross we will stand till death. Who could leave Jesus? For what should we leave Him? for whom? For the world? for the people in it? No, indeed no. What is there like to Jesus? What can be loved apart from Him? We will love Thee, dear Lord, we do love Thee; and though we love to remain on Calvary compassionating Thee on the cross, still our hearts rejoice as we think of that glad day when Thy cross will be triumphant, when in Thy majesty and splendour Thou wilt appear before the whole world. Lord, King, and conqueror, beautiful, radiant with Mary, Thy lowly one on earth, the fair white lily that so

captivated Thee, Mary the Mother whom Thou delightest to honour, surrounded by holy angels, then Thou wilt appear in Thy glory, and the hearts of Thy children will rejoice. Oh, the gladness of that day to those who have persevered to the end. Oh, the unspeakable joy to those who have partaken of Thy Passion, who have tasted in their degree its bitterness. Oh, the joy with which they will rally round Christ, who have really borne Christ within and without them, whose souls and bodies have been fastened with Jesus to the cross; they are part of Him, they cannot be separated, praised be Jesus. Think of this, dear children, my sisters in Christ. What can it matter what we suffer? Only let us beg grace to suffer well and persevere to the end. Our Lord is looking on, He is smiling upon us. We see not now His look of love, but we shall see it one day, the day when we leave our cross, and our cross has become a crown. We shall see on the last day, with the eyes with which we now look upon faces around us, we shall see His

face whom we loved in life, but whom we could not see; our eyes will look upon Jesus and Mary, and their eyes will look upon us their joyous happy children. We shall see their look, and our hearts will rejoice; those very poor hearts of ours will then bound with joy, our blood will exult, our poor bodies will be wholly replenished with new life, and the bodies that have borne the most of the cross of Christ will be the most beautiful, the most glorious. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall see my God, whom my eyes shall behold, and not another."

How we should love God who gives us this grand reward for so little borne for the love of Him. Why should we not be saints, since we have hearts to love and bodies to suffer? "Do a little for God, and He will do a great deal for you." Let us love in deed and in truth. What is in deed and in truth? what was it in Jesus? how did He show He had true love for us? By the cross. Yes, true love is shown by suffering, suffering in body and soul. O God, for

that grace of graces, to suffer well, to suffer humbly, to suffer to the end ; the end will then be peace. Mary, throw thy mantle round thy children, for it is with thee they will be able to remain their three hours on Calvary. Spouse of Jesus, think what that means, united to, bound for time and eternity to the God-Man, Jesus, Son of God. Is it a real union ? Verily and indeed it is. It is the spouse of Jesus who in the latter times will show forth her Lord within her. In the time of our Lord's Passion the women seemed to gather strength and courage to face the world for His dear sake. We know the women of those times lived more retired than the women of the present day, and yet those women came boldly forward to follow Jesus whom they so loved at the time when others forsook Him. We likewise know that the holy women mentioned by the apostles laboured publicly with them, following them from place to place. Therefore Mary's own, when need be, will mix with the world, though they may love to be retired

and hidden. If God calls by the voice of superiors, they will readily obey. They are united to Jesus, He will be with them wherever they go. Place, time, people, interfere not with, do not interrupt the personal union between Jesus and the soul He has united to Himself. Those whose devotion is disturbed by exterior occupation are yet but novices in the spiritual life. One who lives in the presence of God, one who has God in her heart, will not be retarded or thrown back by her intercourse with the world; the loss of her ordinary spiritual duties will be supplied by God in some other way; though one thing must be earnestly sought for, and that is holy communion. All must endeavour to obtain this in whatever place they may be, though of course in case of necessity this must likewise be foregone. It should be, however, only great necessity which makes the sister who is out forego her reception of the holy communion, since it will be often found that even in nursing a sister will, if she endeavours, be able to spare a

little time to go to the church for this, even if she cannot attend Mass.

Yes, my children, you must go forth into the world, many, nay, most of you, and I rejoice for you. You will do good wherever you go, you will be the good odour of Jesus Christ, you will be as untouched by the world as the pure flame which burns brightly in the dark, as the sunbeams which are undisturbed by the darkness which they enlighten. Ah, then, dear children, go in God's name where your duty calls you, but be careful of one thing. You will give good example, you will be glad to do so, you will converse with and entertain and edify others, but be very careful never to lose your love, your desire of being hidden. If you ever have the slightest shadow of a desire of appearing to advantage rise up within you, crush it completely; when you can do so, perform acts of the contrary virtue, acts of humility and self-abasement, and whatever you would do when in any *strong* temptation, be sure and do then in that apparently slight temptation.

You may tell whether you have this desire of coming forward, of putting in an appearance, if I may so call it, or not, by this: if a stranger comes to the convent, and you desire to see and be seen, then are you evidently in fault; there is no motive of God's glory in the matter; you should note this as a fault, you have been exactly the opposite of our Lady, whose one great wish was ever to be hidden. Correct this. When at home in your convent especially practice this virtue, this desire of being hidden. As you have to go forth into the world and to appear, whenever you are able to do so immediately return to what Mary wishes from her own. Go forth in the spirit of Mary, and remain hidden whenever enabled to do so in the same spirit. A desire to see or be seen, to talk, or to do actions before others, is directly opposed to what pleases God, whereas the desire to be hidden is, to use strong language, God-like. Dear God, so beautiful and yet so hidden. What must God be like? how entrancing, how unutterably beautiful,

since His hidden presence is so sweet. He is everywhere; we know it, we feel it, we love Him above all things, we have no desire but to please Him. The more and more the grandeur of God, His adorableness, reveals itself to us, the more and more our own selves, our likes and dislikes, our wishes, wither and die away. We only wish Himself, we only wish what He wishes, we desire to please Him, we desire He should be pleased with us, but it is a quiet, peaceful desire. We grieve over our imperfections, we resolve earnestly to amend and root out whatever displeases Him in us, and the dear God watches, smiles upon us, and helps our little efforts. Oh, how good He is. How is it we do not love Him more? Oh, Jesus, but if we did, could we live? Should we not die of sheer love? Are there not times when our love frightens us, when we desire so to be with our Love that if we were told our death was near for very joy our soul would indeed be separated from our body. "Dear death, dear death, when will it come,

when will it come?"* But it came at last to the saintly bishop whose lips uttered the words, and so it will come to us, it is the one thing must come to us, it is certain. May it be a happy moment for us. May our soul, leaving the body, seek its centre; may it spring to the breast of God; may it rest in peace in that unfathomable ocean of happiness, happy, unutterably happy in its own happiness, happy in the knowledge of the happiness enjoyed by God Himself, rejoicing, delighted in tasting this happiness, more delighted for God's sake than its own. O sweet Jesus, make me obedient, submissive, or I shall cry out, "How long, O Lord, how long is my sojourning prolonged?"

How Mary loves souls! Oh, how dear they are to her Maternal Heart! Do we love them? Do we long to save them? Do we suffer as well as pray for them? Souls are so beautiful, so very, very precious to God, and yet how little we really do for them, even we who are specially bound to devote ourselves to

* Dr. Grant.

others, who have given our whole beings to Mary to be disposed of as she pleases for the good of others. Our first object in giving ourselves to Mary is to please God by imitating our Lord, who is Mary's Son, who belongs more to her than we ever can. Our next intention is to please Mary, who so loves to possess us, who would rather have ourselves than anything else we could give her. Our further object is to do good to ourselves, to travel a sweet and easy way to heaven, to fulfil the will of God by perfecting ourselves; and lastly, to do as much good as we can to others. We have all these motives to consider separately, and it would be well to meditate upon each in our morning's meditation.

We are bound by our rules to an ardent love of souls; that is to say, we must have an anxious, ardent love for what God loved so much as to send His only Son to die that they might be saved. Our love or devotion to souls must show itself at the time of their greatest need, indeed at all times, but more especially at the hour of death.

At the time when the soul is about quitting its earthly habitation, when it is in fearful risk and danger, the child of Mary is sent by her heavenly Mother to assist that other child who is in extremity of need. Either really present, or spiritually by her prayers and compassion, she assists that soul, and accompanies it to the brink of eternity; she watches and assists it as it passes the portals of time; she is its visible guardian angel; the child of Mary assists the angel of the dying person whilst that angel likewise assists her. Happy communion, loving union of charity. Let us think seriously of this work. Numbers of persons in God's Church pass a great deal of time in various ways, apparently busy, but really wasting time. Numbers of people are troubled with various kinds of scruples, they spend their spare time for thought in self-contemplation, they are too much wrapt up in themselves, and they cannot take a wide and expansive view of God and of what He requires of them. A person who has once fairly

entered on the way of perfection, that is to say, who has entirely given herself to God, either in desire as a novice, or in reality as a professed sister, should consider herself in this light, as one sent by God to work for souls, and should repeat to herself, "I am sent." Take example by the holy angels, think how zealously, how earnestly they do the work appointed them. They have a mission, they seek to perform it, they think not of themselves, they are looking to their heavenly Master's business. We, like them, have a mission to fulfil, we are sent to do a certain work. We must strive to enter into the same feeling as the dear angels have, as, busy about the world, they perform the work given them to do. How pleasing we should be to God if He saw us doing our work in the same spirit as the angels; but we soil the greater part of what we do by our wretched selves; either we do not serve God cheerfully because we are thinking of ourselves instead of Him, or we are thinking of what others think of us, or are seeking

to please ourselves alone, and not thinking of God at all. There are some people, too, who have their own ideal of perfection, but it does not correspond with God's idea. It is of the earth, earthy; it is not a copy on earth of something heavenly. Let us strive to obtain true perfection. It is contained, (I must again repeat it,) in one word,—love. Love, and do what you will. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Have charity, have charity, it covereth a multitude of sins. One person is striving for the virtue of silence, another for a religious demeanour, a constant recollection, &c., &c.; but we all need the same thing, and we must altogether strive to obtain it; we must have perfect charity, constant, universal, in thought and word. Charity judgeth not. How often do we misjudge our neighbour! One sister may think another very talkative and unrecollected, but that sister may have attained a union with Jesus so close, so intimate, so real, that it cannot easily be affected by any outward distraction, and there-

fore she may not need the same guard that another soul less strongly united to Jesus may find necessary to her spiritual good.

The soul that finds her conversation has distracted her when next she goes to prayer, needs to remedy something, either the intention with which she speaks, or too much speaking. Another sister may converse cheerfully, buoyantly, for an hour at a time, and as this gaiety is simply on the surface, or done with a pure motive, her interior recollection is not at all disturbed by it. This should be remembered very carefully by the young beginners, who are often apt to be uncharitable in their judgment of their elders. There are many who from their very earnestness, or, if I may so speak, seriousness of disposition, love to throw off, to relieve by such outward bearing their inward disposition, or it may be to throw a veil over what is passing within. Their Love lies hidden within them, they do not wish the world to see Him, they would hide Him from the gaze of others,

they know they are not worthy (they know it better than the world knows it,) of the treasure they possess, they are almost afraid the honour of their Lord may suffer on account of their unworthiness; but whatever may be their motive they love to hide from others the Lord they carry so joyously. Their inward joy ripples and flows over; outwardly they are childishly gay and happy, but the source of their happiness lies quiet, hidden within their tabernacle; in their hours of solitude they compassionate Him in what He once suffered on earth; they feel in their degree what His Sacred Heart felt when it inhabited a suffering body, and they learn from it His love of Mary, His love of souls, they learn all its loves.

To return to our present subject, the consideration of the rule which binds us to a special love for souls, a special devotion to them in their hour of greatest need, the hour of death. Do you love anything, any person, man, woman, or child? Do you know what it is to love? If so, think to yourself this is

but a faint, a very faint image of God's love for that or any other soul. Think of your grief if you were to be told that person would be lost, would be finally condemned to be eternally miserable in hell. Ah, then, think of the grief of our Lord's Heart at the view of all the souls who He foresaw would be lost. He wanted all to be saved : He died for all. Ah, then, if you are His spouse, co-operate with Him in saving souls. Give Him those for whom He longs. He permits that they should be partly yours, that you may have what is His, and have the joy of giving Him His greatest joy and delight,—children,—that you may be His true spouse, possessing whatever is His, that you may have that union of heart and soul that constitutes true union, that you may feel the interest in souls which He feels. Oh Jesus, how can it be put into words what union with You engenders? What Your little one feels as, close to You, she speaks for her children, "they are mine and Thine." She pleads for those in greatest need; save them, Jesus, or they

perish; save those, dear Lord, who belong to Thee and to me; and her Spouse will praise her. In heaven her children will rise up by her side and call her blessed, and in the joy of her Lord, in the joy of His and hers, she will eternally rejoice.

CONFERENCE XVII.

UPON GRACE.

What is grace? It is the supernatural life of the soul. You learnt when a child what grace is. You repeated the words of the catechism, "Grace is a supernatural gift of God, freely bestowed upon us for our sanctification and salvation." You repeated the words somewhat like a parrot, and even the explanation given you made little impression. You implicitly believed what you were told, viz., that of yourselves you could do nothing, that to do meritorious actions you needed the grace of God; but though you implicitly believed the

doctrine, it made little impression upon you. It is a matter extremely difficult for children to comprehend, and though they believe it, their thoughts are far enough away from seriously entertaining it. Thus, for instance, a child will make a resolution, and be so certain that it both can and will keep it, that it would be almost dangerous to try to bring home to that child the truth that it cannot keep this resolution without the grace of God. Venture even to suggest to the child that you doubt its resolution. Oh, but I will, I will indeed, I am sure I will. Yes, it is sure, far too sure, and that is why its resolution is certainly broken through; and then, mortified but just as sure of itself as before, it will give up the good resolution, until, touched again by some good emotion of the soul, it again resolves, and again falls, and thus continues until it learns to diffide in itself and to confide in God's grace, and humbly to beg for it. A child has far greater confidence in itself than a saint has, though that saint has won such wonderful victories

over himself. "Beware of me, O Lord, this day," St. Philip Neri would exclaim, as he held the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, "for if left to myself I should surely betray Thee;" or, as I believe some writers have it, "for if left to myself I should commit all the sins in the world."

Why is it that with all the good resolutions people make they put so few of them into execution? for it is not alone children who resolve and fail. The reason undoubtedly is, that people rely upon a broken reed, their own weak will, instead of the grace of God. Instead of believing, as the holy St. Philip did, that they are sure to fall if left to themselves, they are either quite sure that if they mean to do a certain action or to avoid it, they will do so, or else they fall into the opposite extreme, and seeing how they have constantly resolved, and as constantly broken their resolutions, they give way to a kind of despair, saying it is no good their striving, they have tried and tried again, and that they must give it up. Why is

this? It is because they depend upon themselves instead of upon the grace of God. What a sad, sad pity this is. Priests may preach, and their hearers may be touched and shed tears. People may write, and their readers may read with pleasure and seeming profit; but without the grace of God both sermon and writing will be profitless. The hearing of sermons, and the reading of good books are useful, they are a means of grace, but the work is but half done. You must pray earnestly to God to finish the good work He Himself has begun in you, by assisting you to put your good resolutions into practice. Not alone must you pray, but you must go to the sacraments, the great channels of grace. You may read books about bodily ailments, you may know exactly what to do to get the better of any disease, but unless you use the prescribed remedies, of what avail will your knowledge be? What, indeed, people want in very many cases is not so much knowledge, but strength to put in practice what they do know. They need medicine, they need

food, they need God's grace. God gives grace to all, but He likewise requires that we seek for grace, that we use it. Every one receives grace, and as far as we can judge, most persons neglect it. (I am not speaking of Catholics alone, but of the world in general.) Those who neglect one grace lose, not that grace alone, but a chain of graces: likewise those who co-operate with one grace obtain a chain of graces. If people would but look upon grace as an entirety, as a real thing, what irreparable evil would be prevented. I have written it elsewhere, but nevertheless I must write it again,—ask any of the most miserable of all beings, the lost souls in hell, why they were lost. What answer would they give you if they answered truthfully? They would say it was through their own fault, it was through *neglecting grace*.

The little I have written, earnestly trusting God will have regard to my desire and prayer that it may do good, will not do the good I wish unless those who read themselves seek the grace of

God, by prayer, attending at Mass, or performing their duties, so that they may impetrate God's grace; but above all by frequenting the sacraments. Believe me when I tell you again what, if you are good Catholics, you implicitly believe, though appearances seem to show that explicitly you do not, that in fact the doctrine of grace is very little understood by you; trust me, it will be one of the most important lessons you ever took to heart if you thoroughly bring it home to yourself, that you cannot do good of yourself, but must seek and obtain the grace of God, that your best resolutions will be fruitless if you rely upon yourself more than upon God, and that grace is not a light thing that you can take or leave without prejudice to yourself, a thing which if you do not take it now you can take it another time. Such is not the case; the neglect of one grace might be the first cause of a soul's eternal perdition. This seems a sad thought. Better to think of it than realize it. We know God is ever ready to give grace, and offers it again and

again, but we may become hardened and not profit by it. The Precious Blood is the source of our grace; but the Precious Blood fell upon hardened sinners who despised it. The executioners of Jesus cared not for the blood that spurted from the wounds of Jesus. Some indeed may have profited by it, and others outrageously contemned it, others thought not of it at all. So with grace: some profit by it and esteem it, others neglect it, others sacrilegiously condemn it. Grace is more precious than gold and the rarest jewels; grace is as easily obtained as the very air we breathe; grace is not esteemed by the many more than the very dirt they tread underfoot. I say not in affection this is so, but in effect it is. Anything that is really esteemed and valued could hardly be so universally neglected, one would think, and yet, strange to say, those who do so neglect it would many of them tell you that they do esteem grace, and yet for the slightest worldly consideration grace is put on one side.

Why we speak especially upon this

matter now is because we are entering upon a special season. We are told there is no other time in the year in which God bestows grace so plenteously as in the time of Lent. Now let us resolve, as we value the salvation of our own souls; as we value the salvation of the souls who are all around, as the blessed Leonard tells us, dropping into hell as the leaves from the trees in autumn; if we desire to lead noble, unselfish lives, and not little selfish ones; if we desire to be true imitators of Jesus, nay, His own cherished spouses, let us resolve to esteem grace, which is our only hope, our only resource, if we would live as God wishes. Now to obtain grace naturally requires mortification, which the Church at all times requires from her children, but more especially during the season of Lent. Why we lose grace is because we are unmortified. Let us examine and see how this is. It is no use in spiritual things looking at matters in a vague general way, we must enter into particulars. People in the world would have to examine them-

selves as to whether they frequented the sacraments and attended the services of the Church as far as they were able, and performed their duties in a spirit of submission and union with the will of God. Now for us in religion, for us who live in the midst of God's choicest graces, upon what have we to examine ourselves? Upon our observance of our rule, and the performance of our daily duties. What is the rule of a religious house? It is for the religious the one thing she has to examine herself upon after the commandments. Her sanctification, her salvation, depends upon it. Our holy father has said, "Give me a religious who has faithfully observed his rules till death, and I will canonize him at once." A religious dies with the rules in her hand, or they are placed in her hand after death, as a sign that she has gone to be judged by those rules, that she has to stand before her Creator to be proved whether she has fulfilled His will, which she could alone do by the observance of those rules. She will not be asked if she has observed

great fasts, unless they were in her rule ; she will not be asked concerning her works of charity, except those prescribed by her rule. She may have devoted herself unceasingly to the poor, to the instruction of the ignorant, &c., but the perfection of the religious lies not in that, it lies in obedience, obedience to rule and to superiors. "I would rather," said a great saint, "pick up straws under obedience than convert the whole world without it," because one act of obedience is so pleasing to God, and by it we give to Him our free-will, the most glorious gift we can give. Obedience makes us like to Jesus, and this is the one object, or rather such it should be, of every Christian. There is nothing seemingly grand in an act of obedience, and yet what wonderful pleasure our obedience gives to God, but not the obedience of constraint, not the tardy, lingering obedience that does at last in a forced manner what is commanded. No ; but the ready, cheerful compliance, saying, when called by the voice of God : as the sacred writer tells us of

the stars, how they shone out brightly, gladly, when God called them into existence, and exclaimed, "Adsumus,"—"Here we are." Let us say this when the appointed time arrives for the appointed duty. Here we are, Lord; bless us and be with us. The voice of God does call us by our rule at certain hours to do certain actions; there may be actions in themselves far better to be done, but that particular action marked in the rule is God's will for us. We cannot expect His blessing upon us in any other place or work; we cannot pray, "Lead us not into temptation," if we have ourselves gone into temptation, and when absent from the place appointed by rule we have laid ourselves open to temptation. God would be encouraging us in our disobedience if He followed us to that place contrary to rule, to bless and to give us grace. Temptation comes, we fall, we are weary, we really may say then that the temptation is too strong, we must give way. What are we without God's assistance? poor weak things

as we are. We surely have seen often enough how poor and weak we are, and therefore we need not expose ourselves to dangers, and yet we do. We do not respect our rule, we then surely cannot realize its importance. Do we know the fearful responsibility we undertook when we resolved to live by rule? Surely we cannot. We surely do not understand that God has been solemnly invoked to bless us in a particular way, that He will do so, but in no other way; we cannot understand this, and then put aside our rule as a thing of little consequence, slight it, let any trifling matter interfere with it, any one's business, forgetting God's great business, and that our great business for Him is the observance of our rule. More easily, far more easily could we be saved in the world without rule than in religion without the observance of it. It is a matter for solemn, serious thought. We cannot go on without its observance.

God is a God of order. Look at the universe, see how all is arranged by rule and order, see the immediate punish-

ment that always falls upon any breach of God's order. See when we disturb the order God has established as regards our bodies,—the pain that ensues when that order is disturbed; a limb is broken, an arm is dislocated, there is no rest for us until it is replaced in the order laid down by God. See the sun shining, see the planets springing into existence, according to rule and order. Think of heaven as we have one day to see it, where all is arranged in exquisite order, where rule is observed by saints and angels, for "order is heaven's first law." Try, then, to think how you have hitherto looked upon, respected, observed your rule. You may perhaps in excuse for some breach of rule say, "I asked leave," "I was so busy." Now we are all busy, every religious is. You asked leave: but if you asked leave without necessity you have done wrong; just as in asking a dispensation, without sufficient reason, from fasting, or in going to confession and obtaining absolution without being in the proper dispositions, the absolution

is not valid, neither is the dispensation, neither is the leave for breach of rule. The superioress may give you leave, charitably judging there is sufficient reason from the fact of your making the request: but if your conscience reproached you at the time that there was really no sufficient reason, the fault remains, the grace of obedience is lost, disorder and consequently sin follow. It may be broadly stated that nearly every evil in a religious house is from breach of rule. We are very secure when we are observing our rule. We here have not the excuse that our rule is so strict; it is indeed very simple; it should be kept, kept as nearly as circumstances will allow, because it would be a simple absurdity to consider a religious rule a *wooden* one. Dispensations and relaxations in individual cases we know there must be, no reasonable person would think otherwise; but let us truthfully examine ourselves. Do we esteem our rule? Do we regard it as God's will for us? If we do consider it, and indeed we should, as God's will

manifested to us, small excuse indeed have we for not endeavouring to keep it. "Where there is a will there is a way." If we looked at our rule and considered it, we should find a way of keeping it. At such an hour I have to be at office; how can I arrange my work accordingly? Whereas it does seem at times as though we are glad of a seeming excuse to get off our rule. We do not at all arrange our work so as to be in proper time at the place of appointment with God. He is waiting for us there, but He waits long, we do not come. Some seeming necessity keeps us away. Surely we are not giving Him a loving service, but a servile service, a service of constraint, or we should love to fulfil His will by following as exactly as possible our rule, which is the clearest manifestation we have of His will after the commandments. This is the time of Lent. We are all wishing to fulfil the will of God by obeying the injunctions of the Church at this time to mortify ourselves more than ordinary. We are perhaps not fasting, we then must do

some other work of penance; but the very best mortification for us would be the observance, as far as we can, of the very simple, easy rule laid down for us. It is a constraint, a salutary constraint, which if we do not feel, the reason probably is because, whenever some special rule is in our way, or we want to do some other work, we then find some excuse, we think the present work must be done at once, we excuse ourselves from our rule, we perhaps work excitedly in a way that could not be kept up, and we do no more than we should have done if we had kept our rule, for we have exhausted ourselves and are really able to do no more. We have not worked in the spirit that works because the work is the will of God, the spirit with which Mary worked, the spirit that turns the commonest actions into something divine, that makes the most common-place life beautiful in the sight of God, the simple spirit that understands so well what a saintly writer has laid down so strongly: "It is not our *works* God wants, but our

working hearts." Yes, it is our hearts He asks of us, the very root and core of our beings, because all our works are of no value if they come from a bad heart, and they are all precious if performed from a good one, and this is, this should be our daily work, to watch our hearts, to notice what emanates from them, to correct, to mortify all our evil inclinations, and thus make our hearts pure and pleasing, fresh, fragrant, dear to God.

We cannot do anything without mortification. Let us, then, strive and fulfil the necessary mortifications of our state. It is really no more than what we are told by our catechism, "What are the virtues we are to learn of Jesus? Meekness, humility, obedience;" the three grand virtues of the Heart of the Lamb of God. Let us now run over in our minds what we have been considering: the importance of grace; the danger of losing it; the veneration we should have for our rule; the temptations we certainly expose ourselves to by the smallest unnecessary breach of rule; the neces-

sity of being mortified, and that the best mortification for us is the observance of rule; that by being obedient to rule and to our superiors we are practising those three great virtues that will render us so dear to Jesus, that will delight Him when in holy communion, in His loving, happy visit to our hearts He finds therein those three sweet-scented flowers, meekness, humility, and obedience, blooming far more beautifully than the flowers that are the emblems, and but faint ones, of the beauty these virtues have in the sight of God. Yes, the rose, lily, and violet, the emblems of these three precious virtues, meekness, humility, and obedience, are but indeed faint figures of these virtues. All material things are figures of what is real, far more real, than those material things themselves, which however give us some idea of the beauty of the spiritual things of which they are the shadows. We cannot see virtue itself, we only see its effects, but we can see beautiful things, we can smell sweet-scented flowers, and if they

make us think of God, if they make us love Him, well for us; if the sight of a sweet nosegay makes us desire that we could be as pleasing to Jesus as the flowers are to us, well for us. But we may be far more pleasing, far more dear, if we will not persist in spoiling the flowers, if we will only take trouble to rear them, for we can do nothing of any consequence without trouble. A little trouble indeed often saves us from much unnecessary suffering. Thus the little exertion of complying with our rule would perhaps have saved us many an hour's uneasiness and grief, for, as before said, we may usually attribute our falls to some neglect of rule, some grace despised, some failure in the little effort necessary to keep to the proper spirit of a religious. The meaning of the word religious is simply one *bound*, one who is bound by vow to a certain rule of life, one who is bound to obedience, one who in fact is to have no will of her own, since in entering religion it is the will that is given up; and surely, if we have once resolved to give to God

we will not take back our gift. Oh no, that indeed would be rapine in the holocaust. Again we will make our offering as pleasing as possible to Jesus, we will all of us join together to render this spot specially pleasing to Him, we will join heart and soul to help one another all we can, by example, by mutual charity, by praying for one another.

Oh, let us be heart and soul in the Heart and Soul of Jesus, let us unite together to honour and love Him with all our powers, let us put off all pettishness, all littleness, all selfishness. What will matter in eternity the little, very little things we suffered in time? We should smile at our foolishness if we could see ourselves from some point out of the world, and see how we disturb ourselves with little matters, and yet are living in the midst of such grand, glorious mysteries, living in the great good God, living in *Him*. Then let us live unselfish, noble lives, let us be afraid of relaxing, let us fear to grow lukewarm. If we relax our constant

efforts we shall gradually grow careless and callous, and therefore unhappy. We shall become what is so displeasing to God, lukewarm, and His words to such are fearful, "Because thou art neither hot nor cold I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." Let us, then, resolve that this shall not be, let us resolve with the grace of God to seek Him alone, at all times, in all places, in all hours. Let our thoughts be of Him alone night and day. Let Him be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. Let Him be so indeed to us. He contains all things in Himself. He is infinitely desirable, infinitely loveable in Himself. He intensely longs for us, He intensely desires to possess us, He intensely loves us. Shall we think such love as His is to be spurned as something of no account? or shall we think it worth straining every nerve to possess? Shall we not dread to lose it? Shall we not, when we daily strive to overcome ourselves to possess it, trust the words of Incarnate Love, telling us that to him that overcometh

He will give to eat of the tree of life? Yes, God, the life of all that live, gives Himself for ever to the happy soul who in this life refrained itself, curbed itself, struggled and mortified itself in all things that it might possess that grand reward, the great, the living God. We shall possess Him, dear sisters, for His words are true. He, Truth itself, has promised; He would have us hope with confidence in His promises. He will do what He has said, He will give what He has promised, He will Himself be our reward exceeding great. In His joy we shall eternally rejoice.

When the little things of time are done, and we have entered our eternity, we shall from our haven of peace regard the life we lived on earth but as a dream of the night. All the old things will have passed away. Ah, well for those who, launched on the swift stream of earthly life, are hastening towards that home, that, seemingly far off from here though it be, is perhaps nearer than they think. Blessed are those whose faces are turned towards the beautiful

eternal Sun of Justice, shining with its reflection, happy, already radiant with the rays that stream from it, those rays which warm on this earth those who hope to possess for ever in their eternal rest, who rise hopefully in the morning with the glad thought of that home in God. We labour during the day, and we rest at night, looking forward to the possession of that glad home, where alone our hearts will enjoy perfect rest, peaceful, certain, secure, and happy rest.

CONFERENCE XVIII.

ADVICE, ESPECIALLY TO SISTERS IN OFFICE.

Recollect firstly, dear sisters, that to be in any position or office is either of great value or great detriment to our souls. It may be of great value on account of the sorrows and cares it brings with it. It may be of great detriment by impatience under and wrong use of those sorrows. They are gifts from God

to purify our souls, and we may use these gifts to tarnish them. Likewise, the effect of crosses upon the soul of one in any position of superiority is useful, as counteracting the baneful effects which such position may bring to the mind of even many a holy soul. The pride inherent in our nature may spring up quite unconsciously for awhile, and then have taken so firm root that nothing but some great humiliation will uproot it. Those in authority must beware of this. It creeps on so insidiously, but still there are signs by which it may be discovered. One sign is a certain lowness of spirit, an uncomfortable feeling; another sign is a touchiness about interference in our office. Now this is a despicable feeling, greatly to be despised, to be crushed at once. Always give ear gladly to suggestions made by inferiors. Be not too ready to think they are putting themselves forward, or wishing to interfere with your office. They may be acting simply and from a right motive, and very possibly it is your own

touchiness about your position which makes you think otherwise.

We should willingly give ear to suggestions made by others. Whilst it is wrong of others to criticize and judge the doings of another in a censorious manner, it is very certain that one looking on can often see better what should be done than the one acting. It is often said by a sister, "I see so well what should be done; I know so well what ought to be. If I had such a sister's office, I should do so-and-so, and so-and-so; I would not allow this thing and that thing." You plan in your own minds a great many things, and yet if you yourself had that office others would say the same of you, and with truth. We cannot expect perfection. There are always so many more things we might do, always so many things should not be done that are done. There is fault on the side both of inferiors and superiors. Inferiors should make their suggestions in a gentle, sisterly way,—not in a rude, dictatorial manner, in a manner trying and unplea-

sant even to humble souls, since they see the pride and self-sufficiency of the sister who thus gives her opinion. Suggestions should be made simply, as though it were, as it is, quite a natural thing to do it, not as though it were mere fault-finding, but on the principle that we are all working together for God, and anxious to forward His work and help one another all we can; and the sister who makes a suggestion to her superior must herself be willing that the youngest postulant should do the same kind service to herself. Superiors on their side should listen kindly to suggestions made to them. Learn of Jesus to be meek and humble of heart. Let them mark it down in their examinations of conscience if they have felt ruffled at some young sister doing something or suggesting something they had not thought of, and let them submit on all occasions to humiliations, to opportunities of practising submission, of being humbled, &c.

God in His love may appoint something humiliating for the good of your

soul, and you, what do you do? fret and repine at it, and perhaps throw God's gift away by being so unlike your Spouse as to appeal against it, and get it removed. For instance, a sister may be sent to make a new foundation. She may be appointed superioress; it may be all her own work. She may prepare our dear Lord's home for Him with labour and love. She may then with regret, but prudently, judging that her time must be occupied in other ways, appoint a sister, or one may be appointed for her, to wait more nearly upon her Love by attending to His holy altar. This sister may be cleverer than herself, or she may be preferred for the duty by the priest of the place, or one who is inclined to be forward; she may wish to show herself more efficient than her superioress. Then is the time for the superioress to unite herself to her dear Lord by allowing herself to be put in the background, by putting herself in the background, and embracing every opportunity of being hidden and humbled with her Lord. Certainly her love

of abjection must not interfere with her doing her duty if she sees that a certain office is bad for a certain sister's soul, and endeavouring to release her from it. It might happen that the superioress who had prepared our Lord's home for Him for the first time in that mission should not be allowed, in the duty of preparing the altar, to go any more in close proximity to the loved tabernacle which she may in the first instance have placed with her own hands upon the altar, because some other sister has been preferred before her for the duty. This is permitted by God: this is well for her; well indeed if she takes it from His hands; well indeed if she humbles herself, saying she is not worthy to approach near to the altar of God. Or it may happen in any other way. A young sister, for example, may be put prominently forward, and the superioress troubled about it, saying, "It is bad for the sister's soul." As before said, she must do her best for each sister's soul. It is her duty to place it, as we would a plant, in the most favourable position

possible for advancing and being brought to perfection ; but her own soul has to be perfected. Our Lord may permit many a strange thing to happen if He has great love for a soul. There may be many, many strange things permitted which seem to be permitted for the sanctification of one particular soul. God almost seems to pass over the good of many souls, to do His work in the soul of one favoured one. Ah, let all, whether in position of authority or not, take the opportunities God may send of bringing their souls to perfection. Let us not say, "This is wrong, this is unjust ; I cannot bear this." Ah, do let us bear something for our dear Lord. Let us not strive to get rid of whatever is unpleasant to us. A certain postulant, novice, or sister even, may give us a deal of trouble ; that is no reason why we should wish not to be near her, or even wish she were not in the convent at all ; by no means. We may be placed in a position that may be very unpleasant to us. We may have all the trouble without any of the pleasures of the

position or particular office we may be placed in. God permits this for our good.

Let us take as our maxim that we will do all the good we can without seeming to do it. Let any one else have the credit of it, let us *do* it. God sees it, God sees us at all times, God is watching us so lovingly. Why do we think of creatures, or of what they think of us? Our good Creator is watching us. What is He thinking of us? That should be our thought. He is thinking such sweet thoughts if we did but see His mind; if we could but peep into that divine mind and view the beautiful thoughts passing through it, see ourselves in it, truly we would wish then to be in harmony with God. We say it so often, but I must say it again. Do not make discord by want of harmony with the will of God. Be ever making sweet music before Him; be God's delight. Yes, be God's delight; be the joy of Jesus, be Jesus' joy.

We must ever recollect that, ordinarily speaking, we cannot give what we

have not got. We partake of or come under the law by which a natural mother influences her children. The mother according to the supernatural order comes under the same law. If we tell a novice to do something, or give advice upon any matter, it will have little weight unless it is what we ourselves are practising. If we would have them mortified, (and it is the one great thing to be instilled into one who aspires to be a spouse of Jesus, that she never can be so unless she is mortified,) we must be mortified ourselves. Our words want unction, and they cannot have that unless we are practising what we preach. Oh, do let us do that. Let us accept patiently the opportunities God sends of being mortified. Do not let us wish to remove every unpleasant thing out of our way, and strive to make a very smooth road for ourselves. Let us be mortified by patiently bearing with the faults of others, by submitting to their contradictions, by praying all the more for them if they grieve us, for those who grieve or wrong us are indeed entitled

to our best prayers, for they are doing us more good than our greatest friends could do. Let those in trouble who have charge of others, (and it is a peculiar sorrow, the grieving over children who are not what they should be,) let those who want strength at such a time go to our Lord and take it, feed upon Him with hunger, suck from Him sweetness and gentleness in their dealings with those they have care of. "Patience hath a perfect work." Err on the side of leniency rather than severity: but still, when you have said a thing, threatened a penance, and so forth, let it be known you keep your word; though if there are great signs of repentance we may show the mercy God shows, but only in imitation of Him, not as being swayed by our own feelings. A good perpetual prayer for those under your charge is to offer all you do in a spirit of impetration for them. When you rise, rise promptly, offering the act that those under your care may likewise rise promptly; offer your prayers, office, assisting at Mass, your holy communion,

your various works, your carefulness to be tidy and orderly, for the same intention; in your guard over your thoughts, your practices of penance and mortification, your observance of rule, your attention to spiritual reading and sermons, your acts of charity spiritual and temporal, your fighting against temptations, your obedience to those over you; let it ever be your thought, "If I am not strictly obedient, my children will not be so; I must resist this temptation, whether it be to uncharitableness, to pride, to vain-glory, to love of notice, to slothfulness, to deceit, the giving way to scruples,—all this I must resist with a strong hand for the sake of those I am striving to bring close to Jesus." We must long to make them better than ourselves. We must take pride in them, an allowable pride. They will be our glory in heaven. We must feel like mothers in the world, who love to give their children a better education than they have had themselves. All the professed sisters, whether they have care of others or not, must cultivate a

maternal feeling. How can they imitate our dear Mother, Mother in heaven and on earth, unless they do? We are bound together to imitate that sweet Virgin-Mother. We must be virgin-mothers too. Those who are not, naturally speaking, virgins, must be virgins by a most singular attachment and love for our dear Lord alone, and regain their virginity by their devotion to their dear, dear Spouse Jesus. We must all be mothers by our feeling the responsibility attached to us, that souls depend upon us, and by our love of suffering for others, our unselfish love of others, for mother-love is considered the most unselfish love there is, it is so considered in the world.

Let us, then, pray, and never forget that to make our prayer pleasing to God it is to be united with the prayer of Mary's Heart. We are to lose ourselves in that great Heart of our Mother. We are to hide ourselves and our intentions in hers, and hers we know are that we may perform our duties well, pray for those we are bound to pray for in imi-

tation of herself. There is our model : our Mother pleading and suffering on earth, pleading though not suffering in heaven. Let us look up to our Mother, our hope and advocate in heaven beyond the blue skies, in which our fancy paints her surrounded by a halo of light, with a smiling, sweet face, so like the face of Jesus, so womanly, so motherly. She is there, sweet Mother. Let us take courage. "Be of good heart, my children," she tells us, for "I am your Mother."

CONFERENCE XIX.

There is one thing, dear sisters, I have not spoken about, for as a rule I write respecting the particular spirit of our institute in connection with our rules, &c.; but there does seem need to speak on the subject I have now chosen, and that is prayer. There are two principal prayers appointed us, the morning's meditation and the office, the one mental prayer, the other mental

and vocal. With most people their day depends upon the morning's meditation. If that is made well, if some good resolutions are formed, if something is resolved, not vaguely, but clearly resolved, and performed in spirit beforehand, and afterwards put in practice, each day will find us advancing in perfection, and that means drawing closer and closer to God. God has particular places and times for bestowing graces, not that He does not give grace at all times, but He has appointed certain places for giving grace, and He has likewise made certain rules for us in order to obtain it. We may compare this to, or give as an example, the pool of Probatica. It was on a certain day that an angel came to that pool to bestow on the part of God a gift; it was at a certain time, after the stirring of the water, that that gift could be obtained; the person who wished to receive that gift of healing had to be at the pool on a certain day at a certain time, and to go into the water. Thus with us. The time of meditation is a special time of grace for our own soul.

At Mass we are praying for all, even at holy communion we are intent upon our Blessed Lord, and how we can make His visit to us pleasing to Him. Of course there is no grace like the grace of holy communion, there is nothing can benefit our soul as holy communion does. We there unite our soul to Jesus, we draw from Him every grace, and even if we do not ask He gives us grace, His very presence must give it unless we oppose it by our bad dispositions. If the hem of His garment gave out virtue, how much more His sacred Body, Soul, Heart, His sacred Divinity; all is received in holy communion. But our meditation well made will render us less unworthy of holy communion. It will hinder our approaching irreverently, it will cleanse our soul from its stains, because the object of meditation is to know oneself and to know God, and in consequence of that knowledge to hate oneself and to detest one's own unworthiness, and to love God and adore His unspeakable goodness. If meditation is well made we must necessarily

grow in every virtue, we must necessarily resolve to use our being in the service of our Creator. We are made to know, love, and serve God: our knowledge must make us love God, and the more we know the more we shall love, and if we love we must want to serve Him, serve Him with our minds by thinking of Him and offering Him homage and adoration, serve Him with our bodies by working for Him.

To meditate well we must use our memory to place before our minds some truth, then our understanding must think upon it, and then naturally our wills will make some resolution. This is what is generally told to beginners, and even those long accustomed to prayer find it useful to their souls to continue thus; but it must be ever recollected that if God leads a soul to some other method of prayer, that prayer is best for that individual soul; and whether our prayer is dictated by the Holy Spirit may be known, spiritual writers tell us, by the effects,—if our prayer makes us hate sin and hate ourselves,

well then, that is the footprint God leaves upon the soul; but if this is not the effect, if prayer does not render us more humble, then, though we may have had very beautiful thoughts of God, they may have come, not from God's Spirit, but from the evil spirit, who knew many beautiful things of God, and who could no doubt speak ably upon them. He understands the meaning of the love of God, but he understands not contrition or humility, he has never had one or the other. St. Ignatius, who was so favoured by God in prayer, never neglected the preparation for meditation over-night, nor any of the little practices advised that prayer may produce fruit; but nevertheless it is true that if, on commencing to meditate, we feel our hearts inflamed with love for God, that would be sufficient for us, we should not need reflection, but we should need to make some resolution. "What can I do to-day to show my love?" would be the natural thought. "I can make all my actions acts of love certainly;" but then that resolution being a very wide

one will be very likely forgotten. Let us make some particular resolution; for instance, I will offer such-and-such an action particularly to please God, and constantly during the day I will make use of some little aspiration that will put me in mind of my resolution,—“My God and my All. Jesus, my Love, I give You my heart. I will do this for love of Thee.” Some little word that we love repeated a great many times will help us in our morning’s meditation. At mid-day, likewise, examination has to be made by thinking how we have kept our morning’s resolution; we should briefly run through our meditation, and see if we have failed in what we then resolved, or forgotten it.

We are allowed ten minutes over-night to prepare our meditation, and half an hour in the morning for making it. God will require from us a very strict account of this precious time. He is ready to give grace if we have prepared ourselves to receive, if we retired to rest at night thinking of Jesus, thinking of our morning’s meditation, if our first

thoughts in the morning were of our meditation, if we kept ourselves recollected during the time that even with good Christians in the world is a time of seclusion from the world, of closer union with God. If we did simply what the rule of life at the end of the catechism teaches us, how much holier should we be. If we every night composed ourselves to rest at the foot of the cross, and let our last thoughts be of our crucified Saviour, then should we find in the morning that our angel guardian would bring us some thought of God that would so sink into our hearts that we should find ourselves almost incapable of grieving God's Holy Spirit by one deliberate breach of rule, uncharitableness, or other offence against Him. Our time of meditation is not given to be employed in sweet thoughts. Oh no, but in the salutary knowledge of ourselves. This is, perhaps, I may say certainly, best learned by meditating on some attribute of God; for instance, a meditation on His unutterable purity, His magnificent beauty, will, at the

same time that it makes us love Him more than we could put into words, likewise make us hate our own selves more than any created thing, and thus, when we feel this hatred caused by the knowledge of ourselves, we should endeavour to find out what particular evil in us most displeases God, and resolve to use every endeavour to root out that which so displeases our dear Lord, and would make Him, were it not for His infinite compassion, turn from us with loathing, but which, when He was on earth, drew tears from His eyes, and forced from His gentle, long-suffering Heart the words, "How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" God, who is infinitely pure, hates infinitely the least stain. Think of these words, and resolve that in the time of meditation you will search into yourself to find out whatever is thus hated infinitely by the dear Lord, who every morning seeks a place of repose in our breasts. Would that it might be a peaceful, unruffled repose, as His rest was in Mary; would that He found in

our hearts the joy and delight He found in His saints. When we have found out the one principal obstacle to His reign in our hearts, then we must use all our endeavours to overcome the evil, we must oppose it by contrary acts, we must make our meditation, our examen, turn on that one point, our besetting temptation or our want of some virtue necessary for the state we are aspiring to, the happy state of spouse of Jesus Christ.

I have not time to dwell longer upon this subject, the necessity of meditation, of withdrawal in body and soul from this world, to enter in spirit into that union, that converse with God alone that is our happiness and privilege. If we cannot meditate, we can still reap benefit by simply endeavouring to withdraw our minds from distractions. We may feel in the morning weak, suffering; it may be a painful matter even to sit up; cold, weary, not able to pray, with our bodies so sick that they seem to overpower the soul; but then we can say, "I will spend this

time on Calvary, I will unite what I suffer to the suffering there endured ;” and though our bodies may rebel a little, and we may not feel glad of the suffering, still we can desire to have whatever intention Jesus wishes us to have ; we can wish to be braver, we can desire to have better desires, we can say, “ This pain is a little touch of Calvary, I will offer it in union with the sufferings of Jesus and Mary ;” and though the whole time of meditation may have been passed without any other thought, our souls will be more strengthened perhaps than by a meditation which may seem to us to have been a very good one. We may do the same with every other little suffering that comes, take it as the will of God, and wish we could offer it more cheerfully than we perhaps do, and humble ourselves at our want of union with our Lord. “ Who would be a delicate member under a Head crowned with thorns ?”—(*St. Bernard.*) If we can do little, let us be in earnest about our little.

Now let us turn to the other point

we have to consider,—our vocal prayer, the office. We know what the meaning of the word office is. “I am going to my office,” you may hear said; that is, I am going to my appointed duty. Now the appointed duty of every religious is to sing the praises of God; the duty of every one consecrated to God is to recite His praises in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody, not with the lips only, but with the heart, and with the heart principally. We are indeed composite beings, that is, composed of body and soul, therefore we creatures owe to our Creator worship both of body and soul. We can indeed have our souls prostrate before God when our bodies are not so, but it has always been ordained by God that special worship should be paid Him, and that our adoration should be expressed by our outward marks of respect. We may indeed, in our intercourse with our dear Lord, treat familiarly with Him; we may sit at His feet, and look up lovingly to the gentle Jesus enclosed in the tabernacle, and

treat with Him with a familiarity which He loves : but when we come to recite the office, we come to offer the adoration, thanksgiving, worship we owe the God in whose presence we live, we come to thank God that He is God ; we come to tell our Father how rejoiced we are that He is almighty, all-powerful ; we come to tell the Son of His love, His Only-begotten, that we rejoice in His eternal dwelling in the bosom of the Father ; we come to speak to the Holy Spirit praises, love, rejoicing ; we have to offer God His own great glory ; we are not able to say what we would wish ; we cannot, as do the angels, sing the praises of Him to whom be benediction, praise, honour, and glory for ever and ever. We cannot, as do the cherubim, admire His infinite wisdom ; we cannot, as the seraphim, swim in extasies of divine love ; we cannot, with the powers, admire His mighty works ; we cannot, with the thrones, offer Him a place of repose ; we cannot sing praises of His purity and mercy, with the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We cannot do this, oh no ; but we

can ask them all to join with us, we can unite with them, we can join our cry for mercy to that they offer for us, the truthful cry that should ever be in our hearts, "Have pity, have mercy, O God of compassion." We can offer more than angels offer if we unite with the Sacred Heart living in the tabernacle, offering worship, adoration, that the cherubim, seraphim, all the angelic choirs, nay, even the pure Heart of love of Mary could never, in countless ages of ages, offer. It is the thought of this wondrous Te Deum of adoration, offered night and day by Jesus in the tabernacle that should rejoice our hearts, and make us join as ardently, joyously, happily, as we can in the praises of the good, good God, who is alone to be adored and glorified for ever and ever. Amen, amen.

CONFERENCE XX.

SELF AND SUFFERING.

Do you love self? Naturally yes, supernaturally no. Do you love suffering? Neither naturally or supernaturally. Then you will not overcome self, or at any rate, if you do not love suffering, you must have it and bear it well, if you would overcome self,—hateful, odious self, so opposed to, so unlike the all-holy God.

If we could but overcome our *selves*, if we could but put them on one side, if we could but crush, bury them. But alas, as a nun rather inclined to merriment remarked, “in the very effort of burying our selves, we must put out our hands to do it.” But there is one way of doing this work effectually, and that is by letting our Lady do it for us, by resigning ourselves into her hands unresistingly, and by never taking back our offering, by taking all things that happen to us as permitted

by God, and therefore by Mary, so that nothing can really harm us. We can thus obtain good from all things, even the sins of others. If upon every adverse occasion we say: "God has permitted this; Mary would not have allowed this to happen in order to harm me," we shall daily advance nearer to that grand place of repose on earth as well as in heaven, the state of those in whom God lives and reigns: that soul in whom self is annihilated is carried by God. Why do we care so for ourselves? why are we so tender with ourselves, our unspeakably nasty selves? We cannot give ourselves happiness, we cannot give others happiness, we cannot give God happiness, we do no one any good, or if we do it is merely as very poor and imperfect instruments in the hands of God, and yet we will be selfish. Oh Mother, sweet, gentle, loving, unselfish Mother, make us like thee, divest us of ourselves, make us hate ourselves with a holy hatred, show us how to make the little acts wounding self-love, crucifying it, putting it to death, and if

we have not strength to do this ourselves, do thou do it for us. Ah, Mary, give us our daily cross, the cross that grows so sweet when given by thee.

How can we be spouses of Christ crucified if we love not suffering? But you say you cannot love it, it is repugnant to nature; you dislike both bodily and spiritual suffering, you shudder at the thought of suffering. This is true of many who love Jesus, but it does not prove that they will never love it. Let them taste, oh Jesus, the sweetness of suffering for and with Thee, and if Thou in Thy wisdom dost prefer that they should suffer without the sweetness Thou hast given Thy martyrs, let them at least welcome the suffering that renders them like to Thee, that detaches them from the world, from themselves, that draws them so close to Thee. "Jesus, strengthen us to suffer," should be our daily prayer. Beautiful is the fruit produced by suffering, by tears of sorrow shed by breaking hearts. Ah, God loves that bruised heart as, silent, alone,—with not one single comforter to

mar the work that He is doing in that soul,—that soul and God are united in communion: the communion, not indeed of the happy banquet given by Jesus to comfort His disciples in His Passion: no; the communion, still sweet and happy in its kind, of the soul with Jesus on the cross. In its joyous moments that soul mixed creatures more with its God than when on the cross, despised, perhaps contemned, suffering in body, afflicted in soul, it seeks refuge in the open arms of Jesus. Now, close to Jesus crucified, its self-love gradually loses itself, it cannot thrive, it fades, and the soul becomes beautiful as, stripped of itself, it is clothed with Jesus' grace, with beauty which is unknown to itself, but known to Mary, known to the holy angels; that soul is the joy of its Mother's Heart, the delight of the angels, who reverence as well as love it. Heaven smiles upon that soul, for the face of the Most High beams with unutterable sweetness upon that soul, and the tranquillity of the Blessed Trinity itself descends upon it, the Blessed

Trinity dwells within it, and every beating of the poor, bruised, suffering human heart is pleasing to God, aye, almost as is the Sanctus, Sanctus of the beautiful spirits ever adoring before God's throne in heaven.

If suffering does such wonderful things for us, how is it we do not desire it, how is it we shun it? Because we do not realize the wonders it works within us; in fact, it may not do us the good God wishes, because we do not take it well. But only try the way of the cross one step at a time: first, try to accept suffering, because it is reasonable that we sinners should suffer, we deserve everything; then let us be patient in suffering, because it is the will of God; next, let us love suffering, because it is the will of God; then love it, because it makes us like Jesus; love it, because it makes us dearer to Him. Ah, what good suffering does us; and if so, it may be asked, why does God not send all more suffering? Yes, you may ask this indeed; but it is a gift, it is something to be valued: the cross of Christ is pre-

cious. But we value it not, we cast it from us impatiently, and we are left without the sanctifying suffering that was changing our selfish soul into pure gold, that was refining it, taking away the dross. Sisters, dear sisters, begin little by little to love suffering; one little pain in the day, of mind or body, borne silently, known to God alone, and taken in union with the sufferings of Jesus, is precious. Precious to God will that little daily offering be, and gradually will come the love of suffering, the love that a spouse of Jesus crucified should have.

We cannot get on without suffering, we must be mortified. We feel deeply when our friend wounds us, when we fall in the esteem of one we love, and whose opinion we value; but how needful this cross was, what good it has done us. There was self in that friendship, there may have been vanity in our hearts. Self has received a blow, vanity is mortified, and humility is planted there where self had been, and the soul is drawn closer to God, is more deeply

immersed in His love, and its prayer is purer in His sight, its prayer is very precious to Him, it is heard and answered, and angels rejoice as grace descends from heaven in answer to the cry of that suffering heart, and souls are brought to God, saved from eternal separation by that ardent prayer offered for them ere they die. God's grace can make that possible to us which seems impossible to our nature. St. Augustine says he could never have imagined it possible for some person to be pure and wholly chaste, as he found by God's grace it was. We do not perhaps understand what this means, but I use it as a comparison to exemplify what I am saying, that though it may seem impossible to nature to love suffering, nevertheless God's grace can so change us that we shall come to love it, love it for the reasons I have mentioned, and love it because we know how good it is for us, because it seems almost as if it brought the grace of the sacraments with it, because indeed it seems at times to give a grace the sacraments do not

give; but it is with suffering as with the sacraments, and as with other graces,—they do us good according to the dispositions with which we receive them.

If God offers you a gift, and you fling it away from you, what injury you inflict upon yourself, to say nothing of the ingratitude. Many to whom God gives a cross shrink from it, shudder at it. This might be no wrong, but then self comes and whispers that they are hardly treated, that it is more than they can bear; or perhaps they will sulk, brood over their sorrow, and neglect their duties; others will be rude, unkind to their neighbour; but how few there are who will go and kneel at Jesus' feet, bow their head contritely before Him, acknowledge that they deserve what they suffer, tell Him perhaps how hard it is to bear, but tell Him likewise how glad they are to bear it, since it pleases Him, since it is His wish and will; tell Him they hope He will listen to them whilst they pray for those in need, for those who, being out of His grace, are truly miserable. Ah, how Jesus

loves the soul that, prostrate before Him, feels principally these two things, its extremity of suffering, and the breaking heart it bears, and yet at the same time one joy, one great joy, that its Lord and Love cannot suffer. "Oh Jesus, how glad I am that You are happy, and can never suffer any more." And one day Jesus will draw that sorrowing soul to Himself, and its sorrow will be changed into joy, the joy of Jesus, and it will be Jesus' turn to speak, saying, "Your joy, My child, is Mine, and Mine is yours. I rejoice in what pleases you more than you in what pleases Me. You will eternally rejoice and please Me." Jesus, what will heaven be like? How can You be more loveable than You are now? I love You with my whole heart and soul. Jesus, I will suffer; strengthen me. I am nothing, I can do nothing; give me some token for good to help me; feed me ere I faint on my way. And I have said to my God, "He is my helper, I will not fear. Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of

death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." God so great will not permit one so little to be without assistance. Send me then help, O Lord, from Thy sanctuary, and defend me out of Sion, for strangers have risen up against me. Give me strength ever, daily and hourly, to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him, the infinitely loving, lovely, beloved God of my heart, my portion for ever."

CONFERENCE XXI.

It seems to me that we hardly think sufficiently of the poor souls dependent upon us. "Dependent upon us?" you may repeat. It may be a new thought to you. Yes, but nevertheless it is a true one. Certainly, if God has given you a vocation to Mary's work; if He has given you grace to break with home and friends, to embrace a life of prayer, labour, and penance; if He has called you to a place where He bestows His

choicest gifts, since He gives you Himself, and remains ever with you,—“I am here for you,” He seems to say to us as we approach Him;—if He places us where Mary specially bestows her graces upon her own: certainly, I say, all this is for a certain purpose. These graces are not given to us, unworthy as we are, without God expecting us to give Him something in return. We must give Him certainly our wretched selves. That we have done through the hands of Mary, but likewise He expects us to bring Him souls. Graces are given us no doubt to work out our own salvation, to help us to perfect ourselves; but our perfection lies in our work for others. Why did the apostles receive such grand graces? Because of the grand work they had to do. As according to the money entrusted so must be the interest, as talents are not given to be wrapped up in a napkin, as to whomsoever much is given much will be expected from them; so likewise will it be with us. God in His own good time will bestow upon us great graces; we need not be

surprised at them, we need not be anxious to hide them for fear of taking complacency in them: but quietly let us show them to our Mother, asking her to thank God for us, asking her to show us how best to use them, and we may be sure our Mother will remind us of the souls dependent upon us. Yes, there are poor souls in their last agony; their angels look to us and expect our prayers. They know God has given us grace in order that we may use it to benefit their charges, and they anxiously await our co-operation with them at the hour of death, and they might well be indignant at our supineness. We who would not like to see a poor animal in pain, are careless and callous, though hundreds and thousands of human beings are lying in pain and anguish, though they are running the fearful risk of being eternally miserable, and though a prayer from us may help them, may induce God to show mercy to them. It is because we do not think. Sacred Heart of Jesus, open and reveal to us Thy love of souls, and what Thou wouldst that we

should do for them. O God, to think that souls are now in hell whom we might have saved !

What a sad, sad thought. Let us meditate upon it, let us dwell upon it, till it sinks into our hearts, and they feel strengthened, brave, quieted perhaps, but resolved to battle for those who have so much need of our help, and resolved to suffer that we may help them, resolved to strive to hinder the devil from possessing eternally what we may possess eternally, resolved not to let our wretched love of self interfere with our love of Jesus, with our love of souls which should be His. Let us be courageous, let us (under obedience) practice one little mortification after another, which indeed is the one way of overcoming our natural tendency to self-indulgence, and the one way of enabling us to persevere in the hard life we must lead if we would be true religious. Let us bear our daily labours to *please God* ; let us offer what we suffer silently to Jesus. We may labour a great deal, and yet take nothing. Some-

times we may do an amount of work which brings little merit. Self may have had much to do with it. Many people, when their wills are set upon a matter, will bear extraordinary labour, fatigue, and want, almost without feeling it. To attain a certain object they will consider no pains too great, but if their object is an earthly one, sought from merely natural motives, we cannot expect that they should receive any heavenly reward. What we have to do then is to bear patiently and *for God* what we have to bear. To work persistently; not to work very earnestly one day because we like what we are doing, or want to show how much we can do, or simply because we feel inclined to work. No; we must work to-day, to-morrow, and the next day, quietly, silently, hiddenly, if possible, that so we may more resemble God. How quietly all His works go on; they rather seem to be other's works than His. He lets it appear so. The seeds are sown, the flowers and fruits appear, and God is hidden in the matter. It is a pity to

work, and not to profit either ourselves or others by it. But we will begin to work in earnest, that is to say, not with a great deal of fuss, not in a great hurry, but with a quiet determination of pleasing God by what we are doing, and not seeking some other work, perhaps harder than the work appointed, but one more in accordance with our own wishes. No; let us do simply the work appointed, and when perhaps the monotony may tire us, or our head aches, and our limbs are very weary, let us generously offer it up for the souls dependent on us, and if we do not feel able to do so, let us humble ourselves, telling our Blessed Lord we wish our hearts were in accord with His. We may do the same when we feel we are not working with the pure intention we ought; we may humble ourselves, wishing we were better, wishing we were more "all for God." Oh, if we were all for God, He would be all for us. We may not know what that means now, but we shall, please God, know it in time. Ask the saints what it is to have God all for them, to feel Him within

them, to feel that their hearts love what He loves, to feel Jesus living within them. Poor little worms of earth that we are, our Lord finds a new life within us, and this is all perfection when we are in harmony with Jesus. You know what harmony means, you do not like to hear a person singing out of tune, it jars, it makes discord; but how often we contradict Jesus, how often we will do our own will, go our own way, rather than His. But, sweet Jesus, draw near to us, unworthy that we are, and constrain us by Thy dear presence to do all for Thee, to go straight to Thee, to live, not in word, but in deed alone for Thee. Show us Thy beauty. Speak, dear Lord, and we will not resist Thy voice. We will not contradict the words of the Holy One. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. Sisters, if Jesus this moment stood before you, if He raised the dear crucified hand, and beckoned you to His side, if trembling you came and knelt at His feet, and then, growing bold from the love that seemed to radiate from Him, warming your cold heart,

you looked up into the beautiful gentle face, and then heard the voice, one word of which would wrap a saint in extasy, speaking to you, not upbraiding, but telling you He had chosen you to belong to Him, to be His spouse; oh, if Mary were not there, you could not bear your own vileness; but she is near you, and Jesus speaks to her child, "I have chosen you that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

Would we, if a mission were given to us by our Lord in person, as to the apostles of old, refuse because we feared the dangers, the difficulties we should have to encounter? No; we think in such a case we could brave all dangers, we would cross seas, we would tend the dying on the battle-field, we would do many great and heroic deeds. God may call us to do such, or He may not, but He certainly has called us to do a work for Him, a work especially dear to His Mother's Heart, to be apostles of Mary. We are but sowing the seed of the work now, and it may appear very common-

place, very little may seemingly be done, but if we are obedient, simple, humble, striving to do the common little duties we have to do well, and in the spirit of Mary, if we are endeavouring to attain a grand charity, putting away every thought against that grand virtue as we would a bad thought; if we are striving to put our miserable selves clean away, we are doing what God requires of us, and souls are being saved, though unknown to us; still more, we are beginning the work which will save so many. We must love our Lady's work, we must daily ask her to make us understand its spirit, we must thank her for having called us to her own special work, we will tell her we would rather die than mar by our imperfections the work of which she has called us, unworthy, to be a part, which she has in fact chosen us to commence. Let there not be one in the little band of Mary upon whom she cannot smile with the dear smile of approbation and pleasure which she bestows upon those who sincerely work for her, who earnestly

labour to do what they think she would wish them to do. Mother, do not let there be one who will be unfaithful. I pray and plead for this. I will suffer as I have suffered. But there was one in the little band of the apostles who was destined for a grand mission, who had the noblest vocation we can conceive given to him, and who lost it, who was unfaithful to grace. Let us, painful as this truth is, consider it well. He that neglecteth small things shall fall by little and little. Thus will it be with us if we are careless about small things; if we lose one grace we are likely to fall into greater evils; we shall, by neglecting the small graces, (if we can call any grace small,) lose those great graces necessary for us; we may lose the vocation given us by God, we may lose our souls. Oh, it would indeed have been better for that unhappy man who betrayed the Holy One of God, who sold his Lord to gratify his own evil passions, if he had not been born. Where is he now? Of what is he thinking, what is he doing, what does he feel?

Miserable, wretched soul, now burning in hell, he has been there hundreds of years, he will be thousands and millions, and then he will but be commencing his eternity of woe. He is racked by the thought of what he might have been, he is ever compelled to think of this, he is in fearful anguish, and at the day of judgment, when his soul enters his body, as one would enter a horrible, confined prison, his body and soul will both be an eternal monument of the just anger of God, whose goodness he had so outraged. For ever and for ever that wretched being will be separated from the good Master who had been more than mother to him; he will be compelled to abide with one whom he hates, the devil who tempted him; he will never again see Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary who had nursed him when ill, Mary who had so tenderly loved him, and whose love he had requited so cruelly by betraying her Son. Miserable, unhappy man, we do not like to think of him and his wretched end, or rather his miserable continued existence. Pray

God we may persevere in our fight to save our souls, pray God we may hold fast to our vocation, that we may love it, that we may be earnest and zealous in it, and so save numbers of our fellow-creatures from being cast body and soul into hell. Let us thank God for drawing us to be part of such a noble work. Let us love others truly, not in word, but in deed, and by this we shall know we are friends of God, and may hope to be His friends for all eternity. "By this we know we have passed from death to life, if we love the brethren."

God, my Creator, Lord, and love, my life, my light, my treasure, my good above all goods, Jesus, teach us to suffer. Show us the power of suffering, make us love it for Thy sake and for the sake of Thine, for the sake of those dependent on us, and who will one day be our joy and happiness in heaven.

CONFERENCE XXII.

We are bound to a great simplicity in all we think, do, and say. We will at present consider why we should love this beautiful virtue, what simplicity is, how we can attain to it. God is simplicity itself. We will put that before us first. Simplicity is truthfulness. God is truth itself. Now there is much to be thought of in reference to truth; so much that we could not compress it into the limits of one short conference. We can be untruthful in thought, word, and deed. We can think untruthful thoughts of ourselves and others. We can act a lie as well as tell it; and many people's lives are living lies. Let us now consider, are our lives truthful, even so far as to be free from sin? I am not saying, have we this beautiful virtue of simplicity, but have we first the absence of sin? for to lead deceitful lives, hypocritical lives, lives of self-

deceit, or lives of deceit before others, is possible, nay, is common. First, then, let us consider that to lead truthful lives we have to live according to our profession, to our state of life. In the world people live various kinds of deceitful lives; but we have not to consider them, we have to consider ourselves,—what is our state of life, and how we correspond to it. We are professing the life of religious. To what is a religious bound? Now we have all voluntarily, of our own free will, chosen to embrace a life of self-denial, of poverty, a life of contradiction, and therefore of labour, a life of humility, and therefore of mortification of will if not of body. We have chosen this, not by necessity, but because we have looked upon the face of our dear Lord; we have looked, and our eyes have met His; He has caught our wistful look, and His eyes have smiled, and His sweet voice has said “Come,” and He has chosen us more than we have chosen Him, and we have joyfully taken up our cross to follow Him in poverty, humility, in self-

denial. We have not merely resolved, we have not vaguely resolved, we are not, thanks be to God, spending our lives in vain imaginations and desires, like some people who really would desire to lead useful, good lives, but do not seem to know how, and wear themselves away to no purpose. Their lives are useless, because they have missed their true vocation. They perhaps know not the value of prayer, which would put them right. But we who are embarked in a work which God is evidently blessing with such a special benediction, embarked as it were in a life-boat to save souls, we are first of all endeavouring to perfect ourselves. With full deliberation, with the advice of those who stand in the place of God to us, we have resolved to lead more perfect lives than the generality of Christians. We are aspiring to be spouses of Jesus, to be united to our dear Lord by poverty, chastity, and obedience. Poor in spirit, chaste, detached from the world, obedient for love and in imitation

of Jesus, we prefer not only to practice poverty, but to love it.

We have to bear humiliations, we have to be humble, we have to lead a life of self-abnegation. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." This our Lord says to all Christians. How much more are those who are His very own bound to imitate Him. Those who have withdrawn from the world ostensibly to lead a mortified, humble life, who by their very calling profess to have given up all the dignities and honours they might have enjoyed in the world, are certainly so bound, unless they wish to be counted by our Lord as hypocrites, unless they wish their lives to be looked upon as a mockery and a lie, unless they wish to be absolutely repugnant to our dear Lady. Let us for the love of Jesus, for the love of His holy Mother, for the love of the souls who are living and dying around us, for the love of our own souls, that they may not become devils; do let us correspond to the glorious vocation offered to us; do not let us mar a work

of God like this. We cannot doubt its being a work of God, a work of predilection especially dear to His Heart. It has all the marks which we see in works of God of special purpose. It has the marks of divine favour which are given to the works in His Church which He especially loves. It has been more marked with the cross than most of you are aware of. It has likewise succeeded beyond what could have been expected, and it has succeeded by the grace and blessing of God alone. We have not been chosen for anything in ourselves, unless it were that, being particularly unworthy, His mercy in thus choosing us will be more glorified than if He had chosen grander souls, souls who would, to our human way of thinking, appear so far more fitted. He has chosen us,—we hope so at least,—and by those who may perhaps tremble and fear, thinking how can they know this, it must be remembered that obedience will make it known to us; and it is also well to remember that there are instances of persons having gone into a convent who

had not a vocation, but who, by correspondence with the graces they there received, have been called by God in reward. God rewards every little act done for Him in a God-like manner. It certainly must be trying for one who has not the vocation to be obliged to live the life of a religious. They would be indeed as a fish out of water, just as those who are called to the religious life feel in the world. But there are instances, I repeat, of those who have entered religion without vocation, striving so earnestly to fulfil its, to them, irksome duties, that God has rewarded them, and they are now in heaven, in a close enrapturing union with Himself, from their brave efforts to overcome themselves in this world for love of Him.

We return again to the necessity of action, of earnestly striving to overcome ourselves, and it would be well to recollect again what was said in a former chapter, of the necessity of valuing grace if we would persevere in the life we have begun. It is not a difficult life. We are not to perform great

penances, we are not called to long watches and vigils, and the extraordinary life led by many saints. We are called to a very simple life, a life which, when we have struggled and combated with ourselves, will be such a life of love and liberty that it will appear before the eyes of God as a life similar to the happy life He in His goodness intended for us if we had not lost innocence, liberty, and the bright and fresh happiness of life by sin.

Let us endeavour to try to spend one day as we can imagine a religious should. Let us begin to-night. Let us retire to sleep, thinking of God, thinking of ourselves as given to Him, as bound to His service, as offered because it is our own will. Let us remember that to profess to be religious without being bound would be simply a mockery. We must be obedient, no matter whom we obey, we have not to consider that, but the simple fact that having given ourselves to God in religion, we are bound to think of ourselves as belonging to Him, not belonging to ourselves. We

should from morning to night think of ourselves in that light. It will bring with it a more humble exterior, not an artificial exterior, but a real sense of ourselves, all unworthy that we are, as being given to God, and therefore bound to obey meekly, humbly, submissively. We shall constantly then recollect this, and our manner would then naturally lose that independent air which we may have had in the world. It would not be becoming in a religious who is professing a life of self-denial, self-abnegation, to have the manner which might have been perfectly admissible in the world. Now, we all do want to be simple, humble, truthful children of Mary, children of Jesus, leading a simple, humble life, and if we would be simple, if we would attain the grand virtue of simplicity, we must look into our lives, and see if they are truthful. By this is not meant that we are fully acting up to our resolutions: but are we really striving, notwithstanding we may sometimes fail? are we aiming at making our lives correspond to our profes-

sion? are we standing daily, hourly, in the presence of God, saying with truth that we are striving to attain to what He requires of us? for to fail even constantly is not to be leading a life contrary to our profession, for when we fail it may well be that we have been striving although we have fallen. To live contrary to our profession is deliberately day by day to go according to our own will and way; if we find a rule or duty irksome, seek a dispensation from it, &c. This is the life which is simply hateful in the sight of God and His holy angels; hateful to men, because we should be acting a living lie. We should be hypocrites, we should be telling to the world that we have done with it, that we have given up its vanities, its pleasures, its allurements, and all the while are leading a far more selfish life than many a good, holy soul in the world. Talk of suffering, of leading a mortified life: do we lead a life such as many a Christian wife and mother lives, it may be, with an unkind husband, one who illtreats her whom

he should love as himself? Has she not a right to complain when the one she has given herself to for life, expecting that he will protect her and love her, instead of this illtreats her? Still the good Christian wife is silent, her sorrow is told to Jesus, and she does not complain at the injury done her, and yet she is not a religious, she has not bound herself to a life of mortification or self-abnegation, a life in which she will receive everything as just that may be done to her, because she has chosen to be an abject, a despised one in the house of her God rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.

Yes, there are many grand souls in the world who are leading far more unselfish, far more noble lives than some religious do. We may go to sit up at night with the sick we nurse, but the mother sits night after night with her sick child. She tends it unweariedly, she is fulfilling her duty, she is fulfilling her vocation, and God is pleased with her. She is dear to Him, because He made her for that particular end, and

she is fulfilling it. But the religious, who in the mind of God is formed according to some special pattern, who has for Him some particular glory to give, who is destined to shine with some peculiar beauty, which, if she herself but knew, she would strive night and day to attain, and would work unremittingly, unweariedly, so as not to fail in corresponding with the divine pattern in the mind of God;—oh, that religious will feel the heavy hand of God's justice if she fails in her holy vocation, and rightly so. God has offered her, all unworthy that she is, a grand vocation; she has spoilt what God intended for her through her own fault, she has spoilt a beautiful work of God. Now we know that if we destroy a beautiful work of art, a statue for instance, or a valuable painting, the owner is far more displeased than if we were to break some common figure, or spoil a picture of little value. So it is with ourselves.

CONFERENCE XXIII.

“Who is she that cometh up from the desert, leaning on the arm of her Beloved?”

As we may now be called upon to undertake offices in the community, let us now seriously, in the presence of God, remembering who has said, “Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them;” let us, begging of God the light of His Holy Spirit, let us with a heartfelt prayer consider this matter. We none of us know when we shall be put in some office, or when our present office will be changed, &c. Let us now think of our responsibility in being spouses of Jesus, or rather let us think of the state we are aspiring to, of the responsibility it necessarily implies by the care we take upon ourselves of others. We, weak as we are, nevertheless may have charge of others,—the sick children, or sisters,—and God chooses the weak things of this world

to confound the strong. He chooses, perhaps, the very weakest, that, knowing their own weakness, they may lean upon Him.

Who is she? Poor little creature of the earth truly, but one chosen for a glorious vocation, one espoused to the Incarnate Word, one specially beloved by Jesus, for she is His very own. Happy day to be longed for, prepared for, sighed for with a holy longing; the day that makes us spouses of Jesus; the day that draws us closer to Him in time; that will, if we are faithful, make us closer, nearer, dearer to Him for all eternity. "My Beloved to me, and I to Him;" so speaks the happy soul to her Lord. Well may we strive and struggle on, well may we submit to mortifications, to humiliations, to sufferings of soul and body, to mortify and kill our own selves in order to fit ourselves to be the true spouses of our dear Lord, to belong wholly to Him, to be His very own, to have a special claim upon His protection. Oh, happy day, when, united closely to

Jesus, we henceforward go hand in hand, nay, heart to heart with Him through life. We are all bound to lean upon our God, and seek His help in all our necessities, but the spouse of Jesus especially must ever lean upon her Beloved, must seek His help on all occasions, must ever diffide in herself and confide in Him. This is likewise most necessary for every nun, because of her responsibility. There is a very great responsibility upon every nun, more especially of the active orders, more especially upon those in office. Likewise those who are not in any office have to practice this constant reliance upon God, as they probably will some day be in some position necessitating the direction of others, and no one is fit to direct others who does not rely entirely on God, seeking His assistance at all times, instructing themselves ever, and placing their whole trust in God.

Now, we must trust to ourselves to a certain degree, we must use natural means, we must use our own judgment ; but before all we must trust to God, we

must use supernatural means, we must beg the light of the Holy Spirit, we must lean upon our Beloved. From the youngest to the oldest sister, all must take this thought to heart, the necessity of leaning ever upon our Beloved. We are asked counsel: let us not give it before an invocation to the Holy Ghost. A superioress is asked some permission: let her not refuse or consent without a glance at God, for if any one needs purity of intention, it is one governing or directing others. If any one needs to put self entirely on one side, with no thought of self-interest, it is one in power. We all need sadly to purify our intentions, we all need sadly to crush ourselves. The value of our actions depends upon the purity of our intentions, the value of ourselves in the sight of God is the purity of our heart, for from the heart comes the essence of what we do; our actions are not valuable except from the intention with which they are performed. In deciding upon any matter, we should first examine how we can give God the greatest honour,

what is His will in the decision we make. One directing others, or in any charge, no matter whether small or great, has to strive to act conscientiously in that particular, to give her whole mind to that particular office. It is more important than any other, since the appointed duty is God's will—that we know. Anything else may be only our own will. Any one in any office, whether it be a charge of children, or a charge of the sick, or a charge of the sisters, is bound to pray most earnestly and constantly for light and grace, and to beg the especial grace we have said is so necessary, the grace of a pure intention. If we read the lives of kings and rulers, we shall see the one great evil, the one fruitful cause of disorder and mischief in most countries has been the fact that they acted in many instances from self-interest instead of consulting the good of the people; their motives were not quite pure, that is to say, in those cases where statesmen or rulers, of whatever kind they were, acted conscientiously, but were narrow-minded or prejudiced. Now

it is hardly to be wondered at that men holding important positions, when not actuated by a strong religious feeling, should be influenced by self-interest.

If it is difficult for us always to act with the pure intention of doing our duty, and to persist in it regardless of any evil or humiliation that may come to us, how much more difficult must it be for those who act from simply natural motives. With God all things are possible. God can and does daily make that easy which to nature would be impossible. Let us, then, not doubt His goodness and His bounty in giving; let us dispose ourselves to receive,—that is the principal thing we have to do. Let us be in earnest, let us look our difficulties in the face, and generously resolve to surmount them; let us not shirk our difficulties, let us not put our hand to the plough and then look back, or we shall never be fit for the kingdom of heaven. Oh no, we will never look back, we will look ever upwards, where Jesus is waiting for us, holding a crown in His hands, which He is longing to

place, to our everlasting joy, upon our brows. Yes, He is waiting, watching, and if we thought of His constant care and watchfulness over us, His ardent desire that we should persevere, through all difficulties, to come to Himself in heaven, we should fight more bravely, we should be less easily disheartened, we should think no pains too great to do His business on earth, to use His talents well, to perform the work for which He made us, whether great or small, to fulfil our allotted duties conscientiously, carefully, not to the eye as pleasing men, but as pleasing God, not seeking to serve only those who please us, not seeking to do only what seems to ourselves reasonable, but seeking to serve those who may seem to us froward and perverse; to do what is asked of us, even though it may seem unreasonable, unjust, for we are not to concern ourselves with questioning the motives of those who direct us; it is on their consciences that their motives are pure, and a sorrowful sight to our Lord is the conscience of one in power whose motives

are not pure, and whose decisions or commands are actuated by any other motive than the pure desire of doing the best for those confided to her care. The abuse of power in religion is far worse than the abuse of power in the world. There is almost a feeling of sacrilege in the abuse of power in religion. But whatever be the motive of those directing, those under direction are ever right in obeying. That is why those are always thought so happy who live under simple obedience, who live in subjection; they have nothing to occupy their thoughts but our dear Lord, and their conversation is continually in heaven, and when, after having finished their life on earth, both superiors and those under their care have each fulfilled their respective duties to each other and to God, have fulfilled the will of God, have gone hand in hand, heart to heart with Him in this life, and finished its short day, they will for ever be hand to hand, heart to heart, soul to soul with Jesus, the life, the soul of all that lives, in the long day of eternity. His voice

will speak comforting words, rewarding us for a lifetime of trouble. "Come," will He say, and our soul will spring to Him, "Come, thou shalt be crowned, thou hast been faithful over a few things; well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Those who live under obedience, or indeed all Catholics, for all in one way or another are bound to obedience, are bound likewise to pray earnestly for those directing them. It is a positive duty, as we have before said; it is the positive duty of those directing to constantly pray, to refer to God on all occasions, to lean upon Him, to act ever as instruments, (as they really are,) in the hand of God. They have to act diffidently as well as firmly, and those they are directing have simply to obey, without murmuring or rebelling, praying to God for those who are directing them, even supposing, which God forbid, they might have one to direct them who was really bad. We are told by a holy writer that God, as a punishment for

our sins, might even permit us to have a bad Pope. It was the permitted punishment He inflicted on His chosen people of old, and then He told them that they were to do as their priests directed them, but not to follow their evil example. We know that God still made use of them, unworthy as they were, and even gave to the high-priest for the year the gift of prophecy. The Scripture expressly mentions that Caiphas was high-priest that year when he gave forth his verdict "that it was better one man should die for the people:" true words indeed, but a wicked, unjust heart that uttered them. Yet God worked out His own designs, His good designs, by means of the evil designs of men. And so with us. If we cannot understand the decisions of superiors, if they appear to us to be, or are manifestly, unjust, our one duty is to obey, not to obey doggedly, sullenly, but patiently at least, if we cannot, which is better, cheerfully.

We are come here to take part in a work which is devoted specially to Cal-

vary. We love to imitate our Lady in all the times of her life, but at all times of her life she possessed the spirit which shone on Calvary so brightly, with such unearthly beauty we had almost said, but that we recollect that patience, like hope, are for us, as for her, purely earthly flowers, for we cannot exercise them in heaven. Yes, if we have injustice to suffer, we can put in practice what we have perhaps often resolved in our meditations, to imitate the patience and meekness of Jesus and Mary, especially on Calvary, where the greatest injustice the world ever saw, as well as the greatest virtue, was practised. Yes; from the greatest evils spring the greatest goods. The virtue of the saints was ever tried by sinners. There was a kind of attraction, it almost seems, in the saints, that drew sinners near them to try them and bring out their virtue more brightly than it could ever have shone without the trials to which it had been subjected. God often permits us to try one another, but good to ourselves, glory to Him, can ever accrue

from it. If we are spoken to sharply, unjustly, by our sister, one not placed over us, she is of course in the wrong, and very wrong, for a religious has to show Jesus Christ in her behaviour. But we who are thus spoken to have likewise to show forth Jesus Christ, and when are we more like Him than when we are suffering injustice patiently, when we meekly give up our own will, like our Lord, when obediently we obey one who, it may be, is our inferior? But we must remember it is possible for us to think ourselves unjustly treated when we really are not so. We must recollect that those who give some direction or advice must act according to their conscience. Every one in charge of a duty must be allowed to judge about that duty. A sister in charge of the work-room, if she thinks things are not done well, must say so to the sister under her. A sister in charge of the kitchen must have her own ideas of order, and so on, and the sister working under her must not complain, and has no reason to do so, though she may think the presiding

sister fidgetty. A sister infirmarian must give her directions conscientiously, without regard to what may be thought; she must order what she thinks proper, and likewise say what she thinks is not good for those under her care, and those under her have no reason or right to take umbrage at what she says. Likewise the sister who has to see that the rule is carried out must act according to her conscience. And I myself, dear sisters, beg you all to tell me openly and simply where you think I am wrong, or take over-strict views of things. I ask you likewise to bear with me, and pray for me, and to consider that though I may make mistakes,—though it is hardly worth saying, as I am so unfit to direct others,—yet because of my weakness God will help me, and that any mistakes made by one who is willing to suffer anything to fulfil her charge faithfully, one who has more than the love of one heart, God knows, for you all; such mistakes, I say, are not likely to be serious ones. God will surely listen to the cry of my heart, to suffer anything

that it is possible by His grace to suffer, so that both in this life and in the next I may live in His love, not alone, not by myself, but with those whom He has given me with me. It is a hard thing, no doubt, for you to trust one such as me; but if you will trust me, may be I may assist you more than you at present think, assist you by more and more earnestly begging our Lord's help, and trusting that, according to His promise, as He has said almost with an oath He will hear our prayers in the day that we call upon Him, He will hear my earnest desire and prayer that He will not spare me in anything, if by giving me suffering He will thus make up for my other deficiencies in the work appointed me, which will be, though an anxious work because of my unfitness, still if you will let it be so by loving and helping me, a very happy one, a labour of love, since it must be in order to help me that Jesus has put into me a feeling such as is not to be told except by those who experience it; a feeling which made St. Augustine cry out to

his flock, "I desire not to be saved without you;" a feeling greater than the love which springs from the nearest and dearest natural ties, were it even of a mother or a father; a feeling which death could not destroy, but only increase. For, please God, in heaven we shall love as we are beloved; there we shall see those we love happy, and rejoice in their happiness, and thank God who made them so loveable; where sorrow will be no more, but everlasting, intense joy; joy, not alone for ourselves, but joy for others, throbbing with delight that they are happy whom on earth we looked upon with breaking, bleeding hearts. There we shall not mourn as now, but God Himself will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and imprint on our foreheads the kiss of everlasting peace.

CONFERENCE XXIV.

Let it be ever remembered what great good is done by showing but one soul the way of Mary, therefore do not be afraid of admitting postulants, but likewise never be afraid of keeping them too long in their state of probation when you have the slightest doubt whether they are suited to follow Mary to Calvary. Let them enter the path of Mary, but never urge them farther than they have grace to go. Oh, the unspeakable evil that is done in religious orders by having members unsuited. Even though the numbers of those who come close to the cross of our Lord and watch His death agony be reduced to the number that originally did watch, never mind. Let the few who join the highest part of this work of Mary for the good of holy Church be those who have been well tried, who have suffered long. It may be taken as a sign that

the novice who has not partaken of our Lord's agony in the garden is not fitted to live on Calvary. For many reasons Gethsemane was more sorrowful than Calvary. It almost seemed as if our Lord's peace was disturbed in the garden. It was not so, but it almost seems so. He likewise then went through the most painful suffering of *fear*. If the soul does not reach Gethsemane, let it not proceed to Calvary. Wait, no matter how many years; there is no hurry in God's works.

I particularly wish that few postulants should be refused admittance to try their vocation. They will all be led into the path of Mary, and thus do incalculable service to their souls, and if they find that their vocation is for the world, they will return to it to live over again the wondrously sweet domestic life of Mary. They will go through the spiritual exercises, and can return at any time for a retreat. "The sanctuary of the Heart of Mary" must be a place of refuge, a place of retreat for members in the world who will come and be

consecrated to Mary, after having passed through the preparatory exercises (shortened when needful). One thing should be observed regarding this retreat for those who live in the world. It is that at least during a part of the time they should not be wholly secluded. They may make the offering before the retreat is finished, and then, having entered the path of Mary, commence their life in its spirit, performing such duties as they have in their own homes, but in the new way in which they have learnt to perform them. This will be found more profitable than meditating, &c. For those who have to spend the greater part of their lives in external actions, it is most essential to acquire the habit of performing them so that they shall not be lost. What a grand mistake devout people make by thinking, "I will get over all these things as soon as possible, and put by a nice long time to myself to say my rosary, meditate, &c." They hurry over their actions, commit some venial sins in their haste, fail to edify if they do not

even scandalize their neighbour, and waste a deal of precious time, a number of meritorious actions, through this delusion they are under,—for delusion it certainly is. Can you imagine our Lady acting thus? Oh, no. With calm self-possession she went about her daily duties, God with her in them all, even before the Incarnation. The action she did was performed perfectly, but the interior intention that accompanied it made it still more perfect. But these devout people sometimes perform the action most imperfectly, though they have a good intention to do it, because it is the will of God, forgetting that if it is the will of God they should do it at all, it is His will they should do it well. Others will be particular, scrupulously so, to perform their actions exteriorly well, but are not particular to purify their intention.

When will people be convinced of the value of a good intention? I am speaking now to seculars, as it cannot be thought that Mary's own, who are heart and soul with her work, could have any

intention away from her; but those who come to make a retreat in the convent, or who make it in their own homes, must also learn to clothe themselves with Mary. To learn to perform their actions well, let them practise it during retreat, that is to say, before going back to the world, whilst they have the fervour and good resolutions of the retreat; let them practise, in the way I am describing, such duties as they can; let them come out from their entire seclusion from the world, and study how they are to spend their days so as to make them full days. Not a time given to God, and then a time to oneself apart from God, a time for their neighbour distinct from God. Oh, no. A time for God alone certainly is necessary, and a time for one's neighbour; but why apart from Him? A time for one's duties and recreation; but why separate them from God? Our Lady did not so. Therefore let great stress be laid upon that portion of time set apart at the end of the retreat for studying,—and not alone studying, but practising,—the

best way of performing the daily duties of life, even the duty, (which some do not consider a duty,) of answering letters. Let every action be a golden one, and your life will indeed be one of glory to God, a serviceable one to your neighbour, a peaceful one to yourself, and a happy death will await you at its end. I seem not able to say enough of the importance of the daily actions of life. Live in the present moment, do not look forward to what you will do and the number of prayers you will say, the good time you will spend when you have finished your work; but make the present time now good, whatever may be the duty that occupies you, and it may perhaps be more pleasing to God than the time you propose to spend with Him, though far be it from me to undervalue the time spent alone with God, or wish to make you fall into the mistake of those who think they cannot find time to spend in prayer, when they could with a little exertion. These are very mistaken people too, for they do not forward themselves in their work

by neglecting the one thing necessary. They who can find time for many an unnecessary worldly matter, and so cannot find time for God, are sadly in the wrong and sadly mistaken. Such people will find that the day they heard Mass they have got through more work than on the day they did not. Two important objects for which to petition God, two things so needful for all, the devout as well as the indevout, are these, that they may value grace, and that means not to neglect the opportunities of obtaining it. The second petition should be that they may avoid excess, and that is to preserve the happy medium in which true perfection consists, and which was ever practised by Mary.

My God, my God, hear my prayer, that Mary may be born spiritually in souls. Thou alone canst open their minds to understand true devotion to her. My words can do little, but do Thou speak whilst I write. Let a ray of light come upon this earth from Light Inaccessible. May a thought of Thy divine mind be imprinted upon the

minds of men. Bring them as little children to learn Thy will, the sweet will that wills their salvation, and wills it through Mary. Subject the whole world to her gentle empire as is right and reasonable, since Jesus our Lord, the Ruler of the world, was subject to her. Mother, we turn to thee; Queen, mistress of the world, thy children will strive to make thee known through the whole earth. They trust to thy help; assist the weak ones whom thou hast chosen wherewith to confound the strong. They rely upon thee, they trust to thee. My children, this trust will not be in vain. Mary will ever aid and assist you with a powerful arm; but you must have a grand hope in her, you must be unworldly, uncalculating. I entreat you, refrain from putting your trust in princes, for vain is the help of man. Act simply, and remember, I warn you, the house that fails to act generously, that, for instance, acts with that overworldly prudence that creeps even into religious houses will fall. I say that house *will fall*, and I pray that it may.

Read Thomas à Kempis, where he complains that the question is asked regarding the talents, &c., of a person, but not how much virtue they have. Reject no one on account of ill-health. God can and God will give health if it is necessary, or He may wish to send a blessing to the house by sending one who suffers, and sanctifies her suffering. She brings a treasure to Mary's store who brings well-borne suffering. Open the doors wide to receive wayfarers from the world. Mary has given her Heart to her own Little Company; they must act by its dictates; they must act with the most perfect form of human love, the mother's, with that mother-love raised to such a height as it was raised in Mary. To this they must endeavour to correspond, and ever act as they think Mary expects them to do. Therefore act ever generously, and Mary will never fail you. "Did you want for anything?" asked Jesus of His disciples who possessed nothing; and Mary will ask this of her own if they are faithful to her. Often indeed they want, but

their wants will ever be supplied. Numberless difficulties will arise, but they will ever be surmounted. How can Mary's own exercise hope as she would have them without occasions of want and difficulty?

Let those who come to make the spiritual exercises in Mary's retreats not be asked for money. Those who can pay will certainly do so: those who cannot must be received all the same. No need to say that they must be treated the same. Those who wish to make a retreat must be received with joy by Mary's own, as they receive the little wayfarer from the world as Mary would. Pray earnestly for it as a mother should pray for her child. Make its sojourn as peaceful and as happy as is possible, and then send it back again into the world to be a little apostle of Mary, to make known true devotion to her, and to endeavour that numbers may follow its example, and enter one of Mary's homes to be born again in her, and thus in God's good time will be fulfilled the wish of our patron, I may say our father,

Mary's beloved servant, the Venerable De Montfort, that the whole world should be made subject to this devotion to Mary.

Parents who may have received benefit from such retreats should endeavour that their children likewise may receive such a grace and benefit, and not only their children, but their servants and others under their care. The happiness of private homes would be greatly increased by faithful domestics. They are very rare, and sad it is to say, often those who are good in themselves are not good as regards their work, through perhaps misdirected piety. This will certainly not be the case with those who enter the way of Mary.

There is a mistaken idea in many who desire perfection, that it is not to be found in the world. In this they are wrong. People may attain as high a perfection, (aye, and certainly since perfection consists in doing the will of God, a higher perfection,) in the world as in the cloister. There can be no doubt that if it is God's will they should

remain in the world He will give them grace to perfect themselves there, for perfection is to be attained by our corresponding with whatever it is that God wills for us. There are various kinds of flowers and fruits upon the earth, so also there are various kinds of beauty in the human soul. We must each bring forth according to our kind, not according to another kind, or disorder would ensue. What would be good in a contemplative nun, and be part of her perfection, might be positively bad in a domestic servant, and more than an imperfection in a wife or mother.

Grant, dear God, to Thy sweet Mother's children a special grace from Thy Holy Spirit. Enlighten them that they may know Thy holy will, and ever perform it in a perfect spirit, seeking not their own will, but Thine, having no other wish or desire but to perform perfectly the duties of the state of life in which Thou hast placed them. Sweet Mother, place thy children in that state of life in which thou wouldst have them to be.

CONFERENCE XXV.

UPON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GIVING VOTES.

This is a matter little thought of by some, little cared for by others, little understood by more. The responsibility of a religious indeed is a matter that should be oftener considered and meditated upon. It is a responsibility, and a very great one. It is a responsibility we should consider carefully, but not with scrupulosity or unreasonable fears. We should consider that, as parents undertake a great responsibility by bringing their children into the world, by the state of life they have chosen, so a religious, by entering the religious life, undertakes certain responsibilities. We have no doubt whatever of the responsibility of a priest, and yet the nun undertakes certain responsibilities similar to those of a priest, though in a lesser degree. But the subject of the responsibilities of a religious is too large

a one for our present conference. I am writing now only about one part of this responsibility, but I may in course of time speak about each part, or at least about the more important parts of a religious life, but this will take time. "One thing at a time," is the old adage, "and that one thing well." Therefore let every sister attend to these simple Conferences, and if they do not understand what is written, let them ask for explanation; but each sister should strive to understand and to recollect what she hears. She may at any time be asked some question by a new-comer, or be placed in a position where a certain amount of knowledge is necessary, and where even goodness would not avail without knowledge, or be able to supply its place. We must not undervalue knowledge, nor think it unnecessary to strive to acquire it, for so the saints did not think. I myself have often been surprised at that saying of St. Theresa, that of the two she would rather have a learned priest for director than a holy one, supposing, of course,

that she had to choose between the two, and could not find one with both qualities combined. I have wondered what this meant, though my not understanding it was no reason for not respecting the saying of a saint,—the thoughts of saints are so often far above us,—but the saint's meaning probably is that a learned priest would give his advice according to certain rules and maxims of theologians, and that such advice would be safer than advice suggested perhaps by natural feeling, which good people are often liable to be deceived by. They know their feelings are good, they come from a good heart, and therefore they trust to them for guidance, forgetting that no amount of right feeling will supply the want of positive knowledge.

It is far safer to be guided by certain rules than by our own feelings, however seemingly good. This is a maxim it is wise to follow in most instances, though not in all. Let us therefore resolve to lay to heart what we hear. Let us pray to our Lady, spouse of the Holy Ghost,

that that Holy Spirit may enlighten us regarding what we hear. 'Let us beg our guardian angel to store up holy thoughts for us. Let us each even now pray, "O Holy Spirit, enlighten me; dear Jesus, by Thy Precious Blood give me grace; sweet Mother, spouse of the Holy Ghost, pray that I may have light; my good angel, store up holy thoughts for me." What are we going to learn from this Conference? These three things: first, the importance of learning; second, the responsibility of religious in general; third, the great responsibility in particular which we are at present considering, the responsibility of giving votes. This would open another field of thought in the consideration of God's providence. People pray, chapters are held, and yet it is very manifest what mistakes are made in religious houses, wrong subjects admitted, and so on. How is this? It is as in other matters, or the world would not be as it is at the present day, with all the prayers offered for its conversion, with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ever

being offered to draw grace from heaven upon it. Evil goes on, evil seems to have the upper hand, even to be in power. How is this, when Jesus is at the right hand of His Father making perpetual intercession for us? It is because God will not take from man what He once gave, what He is so jealous of, what is indeed so precious a gift, man's free will. No; we have our free will, and through malice, or through frailty, or through ignorance, we make a bad use of it, and thus it is that, after having prayed, and pleaded, and done penance, God appears sometimes not to hear; but He *has* heard, and He has answered too, He has given grace, He has given light, but He would not force the will of man, and as in the beginning evil crept into paradise, so now evil creeps into the most holy things, and chapters evidently are not exempt from it. If we look at the history of religious houses, we shall see that after prayers have been offered, mistakes have been made, wrong subjects admitted, relaxations allowed, and many other evils,

but the word of God has said that "all things work together to good to those who love God," and those who have prayed as they ought have not been contaminated, but rather have merited by the evil.

Regarding the admitting and retaining subjects in a religious house, some may be in doubt which is the greater evil, to admit a wrong subject, or to send away a good one. The opinion generally held is, I believe, that the admission of a wrong subject, or rather the retaining of a wrong subject,—for the admission of a postulant cannot do much harm where sisters have grace and strength, regardless of feelings of friendship, when they believe a certain subject is not fitted for their community to say so, though she may have many endearing qualities which render it painful to send her away,—is far more hurtful than the rejecting by mistake, or worse, through some unworthy motive, one who is suited. Both the one and the other are great evils; they should be feared and prayed against. Communi-

ties have grown lax, and scandals have crept in through want of uprightness in sisters giving votes; yes, and not only through want of uprightness, but through over-trust in their own judgment. How then, it may be asked, are we to judge in a matter of such import? Each one may rightly distrust her own views. The safe way is, as in all else, to keep close to Jesus' Heart. Call upon your Mother. Distrust your own views, and strive, during the novena which should precede any important voting matter, or we cannot expect light from God, to await the decision in a spirit of perfect impartiality, shutting out all human motives, certainly using your natural reason, and weighing well the matter, but still keeping the mind unbiassed. We cannot of course expect to be inspired, to have some very great light from God, but He will still gently illuminate our minds if we place no obstacle in the way, that is the grand thing we must consider, *we must not place any obstacle in the way.* How do we do this? In so many, many ways,

—by prejudice, by inclination, by self-love, self-interest, self-will, by ignorance, by weakness, and of course by malice, but this we may hope seldom happens, but the other cases happen, and indeed far oftener than may be thought, and indeed oftener than is suspected even by those who are themselves led away by these various motives.

With regard to voting for the admission of subjects to a religious community, it may be briefly said that the good of a community is to be considered before the good of the individual, (though it may be said perhaps with truth that both these goods are one and the same.) With regard to voting for various offices the case is different. The sisters are already professed, and one sister may be fitted for an office that may not be good for her soul. She may perform it well, but she may become attached to it.

As regards voting for the offices of reverend mother, novice mother, and mother assistant, no attachment should hinder us giving faithfully before God our opinion as to the desirability of

such or such a sister being elected to such an office, even though personally we may not feel drawn to love her, or wish to see her in that position. Love for any present mother should not hinder a sister giving her vote for one more fitted, but perhaps less loveable, one who perhaps does not love that sister so much, or whom that sister may think to be prejudiced against herself, and who is even really so prejudiced and undoubtedly unjust: nevertheless that sister would be bound in conscience to give her vote to such a one thus prejudiced against her, even though she may be, and sure as she is, that the effect of such a one being chosen will not be to her own personal happiness here, though undoubtedly it will be so as regards her happiness hereafter.

CONCLUSION TO THE FIRST VOLUME.

My dear children, both in religion and in the world, I found it impossible to compress into one small volume all

or one half that I have to say to you. As your numbers increase, as your works increase, as you have offices and positions different from those of former years, so you need different advice, and experience shows more and more various matters that need careful noting, and likewise the rocks and shoals to be avoided. Therefore the delay in the publishing of these Conferences has enabled me to give the information to those who have read this little work that by next May I hope to be able to bring out the second volume.

I can only say to those who are in the world, read what is written for your sisters in the convent, much you will find applicable to yourselves, much that will enable you to become what I have told you you can become, though you are in the world, that is, spouses of our dear Lord. I have said elsewhere it is possible to be a nun without being a spouse of our Lord, and, thank Him that it is so, it is possible to be in the world, and yet to be a spouse of our dear Lord.

Be truly Jesus' and Mary's own in heart and soul. Let your whole being be God's, let God alone live in you, let your lives be beautiful in His sight. If we only knew how beautiful we can make our lives in the sight of God ! Life on earth is something so beautiful if looked at properly. Eternity is for ever ; life in eternity will go on for ever and ever ; life in this world will last such a very, very short time. During this life we can practise faith and hope ; in the next we cannot practise these virtues, they are purely earthly plants, and yet they are of exceeding beauty. Let us not look upon life as dreary, as weary ; let us look at it as God looks at it. Let us get above ourselves, and see things more as God sees them. We have told you God wishes you to be happy in this world as well as in the next. Live for Him, for Him only, and you will indeed be so. You will taste and see how sweet our God is to those who love Him.

We must draw attention to a new work which will be published shortly, of a rather different style. Having a con-

fraternity attached to the convent, "Our Lady's and St. Philip's Girls," we wrote simple instructions or conferences for them, endeavouring to make them strive to become good women, wives, and mothers. Young girls for whom God has allotted the married state will find this work very useful. It would likewise prove beneficial to those sisters and others who have the charge of young girls, orphans, and so enable them to do a true mother's part by them, enabling them to warn them of the dangers of the world, and certain things to be aware of to hinder our young girls being lost, as too often happens from the very simplicity in which they have been brought up. "What is one person's meat is another person's poison," is a true saying. The manner of bringing up of young girls in convents, which with our aristocracy as a rule has such beautiful results, does not always have the same beneficial result with the young girls who, when they leave the convent-home, are thrown into the dangers of the world totally unprepared for it.

This we have written, however, at fuller length in the work which will appear in a few months.

We ask you to spread it amongst your acquaintances, as we trust it may do much good with our young girls, and hinder many a pure soul being dragged into the mire, its purity tarnished, its self-respect destroyed, and then becoming a mere puppet for the devil, disgracing society, becoming finally so hardened that the terrors even of death do not soften them.

In large towns, especially with the numbers of factory girls there are in many, this book would be very usefully disseminated. May our Lady's blessing fall upon all who read this little work, and spread its reading, is the earnest prayer of the one whose anxiety for their welfare and love for their immortal souls has induced her to give these few hints to the young girls of our country.

MARY.

PRAYER FOR MOTHER.

Mary Mother, bless and protect the mother whom thou hast given me to help me to become thy true child and spouse of thy Son and my Lord Jesus. Sweet Mother, animate her entirely with thy spirit. May the Holy Spirit of love ever reign in her heart, to direct and counsel her in all her actions. May she never be influenced by any motive but the pure love of God and the good of souls. May she in all occurrences turn for light from the Holy Ghost. May that Holy Spirit guide her in all her ways, so that no spirit of worldliness or self may ever creep into her least actions or directions. Sweet Mother of my heart and soul and whole being, make known ever thy holy will to me through her; make me a simple, loving, and obedient child; permit not the enemy

of all good to ever tempt me to disobey or distrust the one appointed me by God to love, honour, and obey as my own natural mother. May the holy saints intercede for her. By the side of Mary, my Mother and yours, holy saints I look up to you, and lovingly honour you, offering the Heart of Jesus in thanksgiving for your graces. By the side, in the arms of Mary your Queen, I honour you, holy Angels, through the Precious Blood furnished by Mary's Heart's Blood, the life of Jesus, my Lord and your King. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless her now for whom I pray, together with the child who so loves and tries with all her heart to please You now and for ever. Amen, amen.

"We grant an Indulgence of 40 days each time to any who recite this prayer within our Diocese.

✠ "EDWARD, BISHOP OF NOTTINGHAM."

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